TOD HALE *at* CAMP

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

To Jack
a
Hubley.

"A Story you
will enjoy"!
"Pa"

August 1964

TOD HALE AT CAMP

Wind and waves struck the canoe with fresh violence

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TOD HALE AT CAMP

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF

LEFT END EDWARDS, RIGHT HALF HOLLINS,
TOD HALE WITH THE CREW, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

LESLIE CRUMP

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CHAPTER I

ABOARD THE *SARANETTA*

"Golly," murmured Stuart Younge, "it's getting spooky, isn't it?"

His companion leaned across him and looked under the half-lowered shade of the open window. For some minutes the train had been following the slow curves of a little river which made its way hastily through a narrow ravine. Beyond the bowlder-strewn rapids a wall of trees stretched upward far beyond the limit of vision afforded by the car window; pines and hemlocks crowding close on the precipitous slope, clinging to outcropping ledges, dark and gloomy and mysterious. It was well toward five o'clock of an early July afternoon, and, since the train was traveling northward whenever the winding ravine permitted, the wooded summit effectively hid the rays of the westing sun. Tod Hale had been dimly conscious for several minutes that the printed words of the magazine he had been reading were no longer comfortably legible, and now the mystery was explained. Perhaps "spooky" was scarcely the word for it, but Tod had to acknowledge that the suddenly shadowed world was a bit depressing.

"Guess that when I'm a hunted criminal I'll come up here and hide out," he said cheerfully. "Bet a flock of bloodhounds couldn't find me!"

"Bloodhounds," replied Stuart a trifle dejectedly, "would fall off that hill if they tried to climb it. So would you, for that matter."

"Wonder what this river is, Stu. Or don't they call it a river?"

Stuart rescued a time-table from the floor and studied the map, but the map didn't bother with so trifling a stream. "I guess," he said finally, after several moments of frowning concentration, "it's the Styx."

Tod chuckled. "Meaning it sticks you, eh? Well, then the next station ought to be—"

"Don't swear," said Stuart severely.

" 'Hades' isn't swearing, any more than 'Styx' is," answered Tod untroubledly. "There, that's better!" The ravine had ended and sunlight again flooded the car, glinting on Stuart's immaculate and highly-polished tan shoes, on the brass trimmings of the two suit-cases beside them, on the gaudy varnished cover of a discarded magazine lying precariously on the folded overcoats. Tod, for one, had protested against taking an overcoat, even a light-weight garment, to a summer camp, but he had been overruled. And perhaps, since they would not reach their destination until six o'clock at the earliest, and since Northern New England

evenings, even in July, could be chill, his folks had been right in insisting. At present, though, now that the sunlight once more streamed in at the windows, the overcoat held no appeal. He ran a protesting finger around the inside of his soft collar and took up his reading again.

Tod—his full name was George Todwick Hale—was fifteen; well on toward sixteen, to be quite fair. He was small and wiry, yet extremely well built, and his muscles were hard. What with his deeply tanned face, warm brown hair, dark brown eyes, brown suit and tie and stockings, his companion's remark when they had met at the station that morning had not been amiss. "Gee," Stuart had exclaimed in mingled admiration and envy, "you're a regular Symphony in Brown!" For the rest, Tod had a nose that showed an upward tendency and a mouth that had the upward habit; by which is meant that he was very generally smiling. If, however, you had assumed from his smile that Tod Hale was an easy-going, too-amiable youth, a glance at a slightly pugnacious chin would have corrected the assumption. Tod had his full allowance of firmness and self-possession.

His companion and close friend offered a decided contrast, for Stuart Younge's hair was light and so were his eyes, and it was one of his regrets that no amount of exposure to the elements ever

provided his skin with what he chose to consider a decent sunburn. In short, Stuart was Tod's antithesis in outward appearance. On the occasion of their first meeting, the Autumn before, at Nostrand School, Tod had strongly objected to tow-colored hair, blue eyes and pinkish skin in a room-mate, and not until many sturdy blows had been given and taken had his antipathies dissolved. The encounter had ended in a draw in spite of Stuart's slight advantage in age—a matter of months only—and decided advantage in weight and height. Subsequently friendship had grown rapidly between them, and when, after school had closed, Stuart's parents had selected a camp on a lake in Northern New England as the scene of Stuart's mid-summer career Tod had promptly asked and obtained consent to accompany him. Now, having twice changed trains since morning, each time with increasing discomforts, their journey was approaching its final stage. In another twenty minutes or so they were due at South Landing, from where they were to take a steamer for Camp Graystone.

Much of the excitement that had pleasantly possessed them at the outset of the trip had waned by the time they had made their second change. Dinner, eaten at a station restaurant, had been nothing to boast of. The July sun had made the day-coach to which their final degradation had

led them almost intolerably hot, and smoke and dust and cinders had swirled in through wide-open doors and windows. Green plush seats had soon become warm and uncomfortable, and an occasional broken spring had not added to their happiness. Fortunately, as the afternoon wore away and the panting engine at the head of the little four-car train wound its way farther and farther northward, the passengers had thinned out until it had become possible for the boys to take their choice of many empty seats and to change their location at pleasure. They had read occasionally, talked a good deal—at least during the first four or five hours; of late conversation had rather petered out—and once, for twenty minutes or so, Tod had slumbered. Slumber, however, was not to be recommended, for he had awakened far hotter and damper and more uncomfortable than when he had succumbed to it. Stuart, usually cheerful and equable enough, had grumbled more than once. Graystone might, he allowed, be everything it claimed to be, but to him a place you could get to in a reasonable length of time and in reasonable comfort was much to be preferred. Now, however, as their destination neared, something of their first excitement came back, and when for a brief moment the fringe of trees beside the track parted and gave a glimpse of a wide, breeze-ruffled ex-

panse of water, their spirits arose. Stuart dropped his feet to the floor, sent an inquiring hand to his tie and brought into view once more a moist and grimy handkerchief.

"It will certainly be great to get off this train," he muttered fervently as he wiped the final crop of cinders from his ears. "It ought to be cool on the boat, Tod."

It was, but not until considerably later were they certain of it. The train dumped them out at a small station nearly a mile from the steamer landing and an asthmatic bus bore them and their luggage over a dusty road and through a dusty, tired-looking village. As they progressed, however, a new coolness became gradually evident, and finally, as the old bus rattled and coughed over the rise of a hill, Lake Tole came into sight. There seemed to be very little of it, though, and Tod, who had unconsciously pictured an expanse of inland water about the size of Lake Superior, was disappointed. It looked to be scarcely more than a mile and a half to the farther shore. A glance at his companion showed him that Stuart was also, if not disappointed, at least surprised.

There was quite a settlement about the two or three piers that stretched their wooden lengths out over the shallow water. A small yellow structure bore the sign: "Lake Tole Transportation

Company," and under a wooden awning that continued from office to pier nearly a dozen intending voyagers were waiting. Since the bus had held, besides Tod and Stuart, three other passengers, and since there was the usual congregation of loiterers around, the Landing proper appeared to be quite metropolitan. The boys yielded another two inches of their long tickets to the bus driver and joined the waiting group under the awning, placing their suit-cases, tennis rackets, fishing rods, overcoats and magazines in an imposing pile and baring flushed faces and damp heads to the fresh breeze.

At a neighboring wharf a half-dozen launches rolled lazily, and small sailing craft and rowboats were moored in the deeper water. The landing was at the head of a small bay, Tod observed, and beyond the mouth, a half-mile distant, the water appeared to be in considerable commotion. Tod viewed the larger of the nearby launches a bit dubiously and wondered whether one could be seasick on so small a pond as Tole appeared to be. Of course the boat they were to travel on was presumably much larger than the launch, but how much larger? It was already past leaving time, but the bus driver had explained that the steamer hadn't yet returned from her afternoon trip. There was a moving

smudge of smoke close to the farther shore, however, and the boys agreed that it probably represented the boat.

They whiled away the time by sauntering over to the near-by wharf and inspecting the launches there, by purchasing two tepid bottles of "pop" and some picture post-cards and by penetrating the small waiting room. A poster in there showed the picture of a perfect leviathan of a steamer above a schedule of leaving times for a dozen or more landings, and Tod felt relieved. Of course the steamer wouldn't be actually as large as the picture predicted, but even if it proved only half the size it would suffice. When they returned to the wharf they noted a stirring amongst the passengers and loungers, and the boat was just coming around the rocky promontory at the right of the harbor entrance.

"Golly," said Tod, "quite a noble craft! Two decks and everything!" Presently she was close enough to reveal the inscription on the white bow and they read: "L. T. N. Co.," and below and in much larger characters, "SARANETTA." And then, in more modest letters, "U. S. MAIL." There was quite a bit of excitement while the boat maneuvered to the end of the wharf. Bells rang and jangled and the sun-dyed water boiled at the stern. Lines flew pierward, uncoiling, and hawsers were hauled, dripping, from the water.

Stuart was rather sarcastic about the operation, declaring that they ought to have had two or three tugs to help. Finally the worn gangplanks were thumped to the deck and a few arrivals tramped ashore. Restrained by a ridiculously inadequate length of quarter-inch rope stretched across the end of the pier, the group of waiting travelers held their luggage and waited patiently while a small amount of freight and several scuffed leather mail-sacks were brought ashore. Then an end of the rope was dropped and the patient ones trudged over it and went aboard.

Tod, in the lead, preceded Stuart along the deck to the stern and from there up a flight of steps to the deck above the cabins. Up there a bench ran along each side from steps to smoke-stack, and they piled their belongings on it and seated themselves. Only four of their fellow-voyagers chose to follow them, and presently, after the *Saranetta* had swung about and churned herself away from land, the reason was apparent. The smoke-stack became a volcano, spouting heavy black smoke and very warm cinders, and, since the breeze was blowing aft, those on the upper deck got the full benefit. Tod, though, refused to retreat. After life on the train, he declared nothing *Saranetta* could hand him in the way of smoke or cinders was going to feaze him a bit! And after a while the steamer passed the

mouth of the bay and the breeze freshened and blew quarteringly, and the smoke and sparks lessened. The boys shook the cinders from the folds of their clothes and took an interest in their neighbors.

Of these one was an Armenian peddler, his battered shoes wedged between two huge canvas telescopes, a second was a prosperous appearing gentleman who might have been a farmer and the last two were youths of about the age of Tod and Stuart. Well, perhaps the one sitting close to the steps might have been nearer seventeen than sixteen. He was a thin boy with an oddly rusty look; rather, as Stuart phrased it, as though some one had left him out in the rain overnight. He had reddish-brown hair—or brownish-red, possibly—and was well decorated with freckles. His straw hat was in his hand, for the sake of safety, and the breeze was blowing his rather long locks about riotously. His similarity to a streak of rust was sustained by a tan shirt and a suit of pronouncedly "collegiate" clothes of a shaggy texture and a faintly yellowish hue. Now and then he eyed Tod and Stuart furtively out of a pair of eyes that might have been most any color. He was an unattractive youth, and seemed to be aware of the fact and to resent it.

The other boy was far more presentable. He

was probably sixteen years of age, with a clear, smooth tan on his roundish face and with a friendly gleam in his gray eyes. Not, however, that he appeared to be desirous of scraping up an acquaintance, for his glances toward Tod and Stuart were incurious and he seemed quite satisfied to sit and watch the panorama of lake and shore unfold itself. He had a good-looking black leather suit-case beside him, with a tennis racket strapped to it, and, probably in lieu of overcoat, held a dark-blue sweater across his knees. Stuart hazarded the guess that he was on his way to Camp Graystone, too, and Tod hoped he might be. Still, there were several other boys' camps on the lake and the chance was slight.

Tod had long since discovered that Lake Tole was really all that the maps had indicated, for what had looked from the Landing to be the farther shore had proved only Great Island, and once past the harbor mouth the water stretched east and west and north for miles. In a rough fashion the lake was shaped like an L facing the wrong way. The larger body of it stretched north and south, but a very considerable portion dipped south-west and was known as Elbow Bay. South Landing lay near the center of the southern shore and Camp Graystone was situated almost at the farthest northern reach. From end to end Lake Tole was close to nine and a quarter miles in

length. Its width varied, the greatest breadth being in North Bay where the east and west shores were three miles and a half distant from each other. There were numerous islands of which seven were of considerable size. It was at the largest of these that the *Saranetta* made her first stop.

Great Island appeared to be nearly a mile in length, and its eastern side was well lined with cottages and camps. Save as to a varying but generally narrow strip just back from the brief pebbly beach the island was thickly wooded, and it was easy to imagine other habitations out of sight behind the pines and birches and hard maples. The steamer made two pauses before she pushed her nose past the northern tip of Great Island and in each case ridded herself of a passenger. The boys caught glimpses of supper tables ashore and, since the time was now nearly six, began to suffer the pangs of hunger. Two bathers splashing about a float as the steamer passed aroused Stuart's concern. "Don't you suppose they know it's time to eat?" he asked enviously.

Once past Great Island and a smaller one lying close to its northern tip the far-stretching expanse of North Bay came into view. Fairly in the middle a second large island loomed, but the *Saranetta* had swung to the westward and was

making for a rocky point a mile or more distant. "We'll never get there at this rate," observed Tod. "I wonder how many stops we make before we get to the camp. Let's go down and ask some one, Stu."

It was getting a trifle too cool for comfort up there now, for the slanting sunlight had lost much of its ardor and the breeze was increasing as the lake widened. Stuart demurred at leaving their possessions unwatched, but was finally persuaded by Tod that no one was likely to steal them; especially the peddler who already had as much luggage as he could manage! So they went down to the main deck, each secretly hoping that somewhere down there was to be found a refreshment counter. Tod jingled a dozen pieces of silver in his trousers pocket and told himself that he would willingly exchange them all for one "hot dog," with mustard, and a cup of coffee!

But nothing edible was discovered; nothing, that is, beyond the remains of a stick of pink candy protruding from the mouth of a four-year-old child half asleep on his mother's lap in the cabin. Tod didn't actually covet that candy, but—well, if he could have got hold of it before the child started on it—

"He says Graystone is the fifth stop," announced Stuart, rejoining Tod after a consultation with a fat deck-hand, "and we're supposed

to get there at six-twenty-five, only we'll be later this evening."

"I'll say we will," agreed Tod grimly, "seeing that it's six already and we've just started! Say, Stu, could you eat anything?"

"Could I! Listen, Tod. Remember those pickled beets they gave us at dinner? Well, by jiminy, if I had 'em now I'd eat 'em!"

"You're hungry, all right," acknowledged Tod. "I thought I was, but I don't believe I could eat those beets! Let's get outside. It's stuffy in here."

He led the way through a door and just as he stepped outside and turned to hold the door open for Stuart something collided violently against his face. Involuntarily he released the door to defend himself against the unprovoked attack and the portal swung promptly back. There was an anguished cry from Stuart, for the bottom edge had taken him sharply above the top of his shoe.

"You blamed idiot!" he howled. "Why didn't you hold—"

Then he saw Tod seeking desperately to subdue some brownish object which the wind was holding plastered against his face, and his recriminations died abruptly.

"Where," he demanded, "did you get the hat?"

"Get it!" protested Tod, emerging from behind it at last and viewing it disgustedly at arm's length. "I didn't get it, you poor fish! It got me! Who the deuce—"

"I am the offender," said a voice almost at his elbow. "Thank you very much for rescuing it."

CHAPTER II

THE MAN IN THE BROWN FELT HAT

The speaker was a man of less than medium height with a grave and somewhat colorless face. In age he appeared to be around fifty years. His dark clothes were evidently good, even expensive, but seemed carelessly worn, so that Tod, in his momentary survey of the stranger, received the impression that the latter gave little or no thought to his outward appearance. Yet a grizzled mustache was carefully trimmed and the thin hand extended for the truant hat indicated the recent ministrations of the manicure. The man's voice was strangely expressionless, and he spoke in a low tone, as one speaks who is very tired. Receiving the soft brown felt hat, he replaced it, bowed slightly and returned to his seat near the bow. Tod and Stuart watched his departure with frankly puzzled looks.

"Wasn't he—queer?" observed Tod. "Did you see his eyes?"

"Gosh, yes!" Stuart grimaced. "Looked like he was asleep."

"Well—" Tod didn't quite approve of the simile, but no better occurred to him at the moment. "Maybe he's sick, or something; an invalid, eh? Funniest looking guy—"

"Didn't look funny to me. Sort of—of tragic, I'd call it."

"And then the hat," mused Tod.

"What about the hat?"

"Didn't you see inside it? It was lined with blue! Fancing wearing a felt hat with a lining!" Tod paused to frown in concentration. Then: "No, I don't believe it was lined, either. I guess there was just a sort of strip of blue across it. Satin, I think. With something on it. Letters, maybe. Funny."

"Shucks, lots of hats have satin thingumbobs in them. Cheap ones especially. Maybe he started out with a decent hat and it blew off, like this one, and he bought another at South Landing or somewhere."

"It wasn't cheap." Tod shook his head. "I felt of it and it was mighty good quality." He turned for a surreptitious glance at the man, just visible beyond the curve of the cabin. He sat quite apart from the cluster of passengers, his arms folded, his gaze fixed unwaveringly on the blank white woodwork before him. Tod shook his head again. "He's uncanny, by gosh," he muttered.

Stuart laughed and pushed him along the deck. "Bulltoads," he said. "Snap out of it, Tod. Let's go up and get our stuff and find a place to sit out of this pesky wind."

The upper deck was deserted save for the boy with the blue sweater. He had put that garment on under his jacket and, hands in trousers pockets, legs thrust out, was observing the nearing shore-line in calm contentment. He turned a brief glance on Tod and Stuart as they appeared above the steps, but there was no hint of recognition in it, no claim to acquaintance.

"He's another queer one," murmured Stuart as they reached the lower deck once more. "Seems to me folks are blamed—blamed—"

"Aren't they just?" said Tod helpfully. "I've noticed it myself."

"Well, unfriendly," finished Stuart. "Act like they thought you wanted to borrow money from them!"

"Say, that's a clew! Maybe the old gentleman is a banker, eh? Let's try to touch him for ten!"

"More likely he's a humorist. They say humorists are always sad-looking. Where'll we dump this truck?"

Scorning their overcoats, they retired to the stern and heaped their luggage on a settee there. Sheltered from the breeze, now strong enough to make the *Saranetta* roll perceptibly, the after-

deck was claiming most of the male passengers. The rusty youth was already there, and so was the sad-eyed Armenian peddler. And a half-dozen other travelers besides. The steamer made its landing on the west shore, left a case and a small package of mail on the pier and waddled off again, heading now toward Eagle Island. The sun was close to the range of hills that followed the broken line of lake on the west and the choppy surface of the water held queer shades of gold and copper.

"Look here," said Tod after a long silence, "what about eats? Won't they have had supper by the time we get there?"

"Sure. Have it at five-thirty, I think. But we'll get something. Bound to."

"Hope so," said the other feelingly. "Right now I could eat a side of beef, a couple of hams, a rack of chops, a—a—"

"Could, eh? Well, what you'll get is bread and butter and stewed apricots—"

"*What?* Bread and—nothing doing, son! Where do you get that dope? Look here, do you mean it?"

Stuart chuckled. "Well, you won't get much in the way of meat, Tod; that's certain. Jimmy Bellows was telling about the camp he goes to and he said they only give them left-overs for supper; maybe hash or cold lamb—"

"Hash? What's the matter with hash?" Tod closed his eyes and grinned ecstatically. "All I ask is enough of it, Stu. Even bread and butter doesn't listen so badly right now. How come we get to camp so late, though?"

"Because you weren't willing to get up an hour earlier so as to make connection at the junction place back there. That's how come, feller. I told you—"

"Yes, but an hour earlier would have been six-fifteen, you goop! You bet I wouldn't! Not in vacation! Suppose we're the last fellows to get there?"

"Probably. Unless the haughty youth upstairs is one of our crowd, and I somehow think he is."

"How about the dog-faced boy yonder? Think he's with us, too?"

"Gee, I hope not!" Stuart observed the rusty one with distaste. "He may be, though, at that."

"And the Armenian gentleman?" chuckled Tod. "Maybe he's a councilor, eh?"

Stuart grinned. Then he said, suddenly serious: "Look here, Tod, I hope you're going to like this dump. Because, if you don't, I'll feel sort of—well, sort of guilty; sort of to blame, you know."

"Piffle, son! You needn't. I'll like it if you do, and if I don't you needn't worry. You're not responsible. Of course, if you hadn't decided to

come up here I wouldn't have, but it was my own choosing. Did you say that your dad knows this Doctor Templer?"

"Yes, but not very well, I guess. He says the Doc's a fine guy, though. He isn't really a doctor, you know. I mean he doesn't practice medicine. He's some other sort of a doctor."

"Hope he isn't a Doctor of Divinity," said Tod gloomily. "He'd probably be too blamed strict. Where's that circular thing you had? That ought to tell about him."

"In my suit-case, and I don't intend to take it out just to satisfy your morbid curiosity. This must be Eagle Island, eh?"

The steamer was slowing down again, edging in at a stone pier. Eagle was a smaller island than Great, privately owned and, at least from the landing, apparently uninhabited. However, a handsome launch riding at moorings suggested the presence of a house behind the screening trees. A package of mail was tossed ashore and the steamer went on. A deck-hand tramped aft and affixed a small lantern to the short pole that surmounted the taffrail, and Tod glanced at his watch and sighed.

"Only two more stops," said Stuart encouragingly, "and then we eat."

"Our mistake," murmured Tod, "was to take a local instead of an express. When do you sup-

pose this boat ever gets back to South Landing?"

"She doesn't. Not to-night, that is. She stays at Lakeside, the last stop. She goes back in the morning."

Some ten minutes later there was another exchange of signals between wheel-house and engine-room and another island loomed close. It was no more than half the size of Eagle, apparently, and struck the boys as being an especially lonely and somber spot. No habitation of any description was in sight, and the heavy, shadow-filled woods came close to the water. Why the steamer should take the trouble to pause there was not evident until, having sidled up to the end of an iron pier, a rather smart-looking pier, a single passenger stepped ashore. Tod muttered an exclamation.

"Why, that's the queer man!" exclaimed Stuart.

A trunk and several cases, the latter presumably holding food-stuff, followed him ashore. The bell rang again, the captain waved a hand from the window of the wheel-house, the gentleman in the soft felt hat bowed briefly in response and the *Saranetta* went on once more. Looking back through the mellow twilight, the boys saw the man turn at once and follow an indistinct path toward the center of the island. Almost at once the gloom of the forest swallowed him up. Tod shivered.

"My golly," he muttered, "think of living there!"

"It's spooky," said Stuart with conviction. "Just the same, it suits him, sort of, doesn't it?" He turned to a man standing by the rail a few feet distant. "What island is that, please?" he inquired.

"Well, it used to be Squirrel," was the reply in a thin drawling voice, "but I see they've changed it since he bought it. They call it Bellinger's now."

"Oh! Was that Mr. Bellinger, then?"

"I guess 'twas. I never seen him to know him."

"Somehow," observed Tod, "the old name seems more appropriate, doesn't it? Suggests 'nuts,' if you know what I mean."

The island was just a round dark blot on the face of the steely water now. Fairly in the center a pine thrust its tip well above the summits of the surrounding trees, its gaunt, twisted branches silhouetted sharply against the amber glow of the eastern sky and adding a final touch of eeriness to the dismal spot.

"Fancy spending a summer in a place like that," protested Tod. "A graveyard would be gay and cheerful in comparison!"

They returned to their seats and snuggled up against the protection of the suit-cases and over-

coats. The *Saranetta* was heading almost directly west again and the breeze had found them out. A landing was made at a long wooden pier jutting out from a shadowy shore across a wide sandy beach. Above the end of the pier a sign stretched to inform them that they had touched at Overlook.

"What of it?" grumbled Tod, sinking his neck farther into his collar and his hands deeper into his pockets. "Why not do it?"

"Do what?" asked Stuart obligingly.

"Overlook it." The jest restored Tod's cheerfulness somewhat. "What sort of hash do you think they'll give us, Stu?" he asked dreamily.

"I didn't say we'd get hash. They'll probably just give us a sandwich and a glass of milk. We'll be pretty late, you see."

Tod groaned. "You can think of more ways to take the joy out of life," he protested plaintively. "If there was any hash left, wouldn't we get it? Just cold, maybe?"

Stuart laughed. "Shut up, will you? You make me tired, always thinking of your stomach! For a small guy, Tod, you have more appetite—"

"So's your old straw hat," muttered Tod. "Why shouldn't I have an appetite? Look at that—that thing they called dinner! Charged seventy-five cents for it, and I'll bet there wasn't eight cents' worth of food in sight. And I didn't

eat more than half a breakfast this morning, what with you pestering me and the fellow outside honking his horn and everything. Gosh, who suggested camping, anyhow? Who invented camps? Wish I was at home right now. I know what I'd do." Tod's voice became faint and wistful. "I'd go over to Main Street and sit on a stool in Murphy's lunch-cart and fill myself up with roast beef and mashed potatoes! And hot coffee! Gosh, just think of a cup of coffee, Stu! Just think— What's that?"

"The engine-room bell, Foolish! And there's the camp ahead, and about a million guys around the landing waiting to look us over!"

"See any hot coffee?" asked Tod anxiously.

"No, but I see smoke coming out of a chimney that ought to belong to the kitchen. Cheer up, old scout! Here's where we eat!"

CHAPTER III

CAMP GRAYSTONE

Tod's first look at Camp Graystone didn't fill him with enthusiasm. There was a considerable clearing beyond the beach, and the various structures were numerous enough to give the spot the appearance of a wilderness village. Near by, as the *Saranetta* edged in toward a fairly wide beach of coarse sand and pebbles, stood a long one-story structure with wide doors opening on a sloping dock whose outer edge hung close to the shadowed surface of the lake. This was evidently the boat-house, for several bright red canoes still reposed on the planks and a flotilla of skiffs were moored in front. A wide dock stretched out beyond the float, and from it, ascending the gentle slope, paths radiated like the ribs of a fan. A tall mast of pine arose from near the center of the clearing, the empty halyards slapping gently in the breeze. Well back from the shore several permanent structures formed a rough crescent between clearing and forest, and beyond them the ground, thickly timbered, ascended more steeply until, a quarter of a mile

farther, the first slope of Mount Graystone rose abruptly. Double lines of tent-houses flanked the open space. Perhaps in daytime the scene might be bright and attractive, thought Tod, but just now, with the mountain towering in the background in sullen gloom, the evening shadows creeping down the slope and deepening momentarily, it was far from cheerful.

Stuart had exaggerated somewhat in referring to the assemblage at the landing, although at first glance it appeared fairly numerous. Evidently about every resident of the camp had come down to witness the stirring event, but even so they didn't total more than sixty-odd. Bearing their luggage, Tod and Stuart stepped ashore. So, also, did two other passengers, but the fact escaped the first named at the moment. They were too conscious of the critical stares of their assembled camp-mates to heed much else. Tod let Stuart take the lead, and it was Stuart who, having thrust through a clump of youths clamoring for mail or express, confronted a tall youth of some twenty-three or -four years who was smilingly extending a welcoming hand.

"You're Nason, aren't you?" asked the councilor. "Glad to meet you. Have a pleasant trip?"

Having both hands occupied with luggage, Stuart was forced to set his suit-case down before

he could accept the proffered handshake, and, being concerned with that matter, it was a long moment before he got around to explaining that he wasn't Nason, but Younge. By that time the councilor—he later proved to be Mr. Buckley, known as "Buck" throughout camp—had included Tod in his ceremony of welcome and was addressing him as "Pillsbury." (For all the world, reflected Tod with an irritation born of hunger, as though he was a bag of flour!)

"And this is Hale," concluded Stuart at the end of his halting explanation. The councilor laughed.

"I'm sorry, fellows. I didn't understand that you were due this evening." His gaze went past them and he stepped aside. "Welcome to Graystone, though. Just go right along and—"

They did so, under close but friendly scrutiny, and behind them they heard Mr. Buckley exclaiming hospitably: "Then you're Nason, eh? Awfully glad to welcome you—"

Tod glanced back. It was the very self-contained youth of the upper deck. And, peering over his shoulder as the councilor shook hands, was the countenance of the thin youth with the rusty appearance! The disheartening thought came to Tod that at supper—if they were fortunate enough to get any—he would have to sit down at table with the latter. He wondered if his

appetite would survive it. Then, having traversed almost the whole length of the long pier, they were in the midst of the main body of the welcoming committee, and a short, round-faced man with spectacles and a deal of iron-gray hair bristling away from a sun-peeled forehead was announcing to them that he was Doctor Templer, and that he was glad to have them there and hoped they'd like Camp Graystone; and that this was Mr. Pope and this Mr. Lassiter and this Mr. Gould; and that Mr. Gould would show them their quarters; and that, as soon as they were ready, they were to go on up to the dining hall and see what "Pop" could do for them. Tod cheered up considerably at the final information and his subdued expression gave place to a look of comparative animation as he followed Mr. Gould off to the right-hand row of tents.

Mr. Gould was older than Mr. Buckley by ten years, perhaps, and he had an almost completely bald head, a nice voice and a quietly cordial manner. They didn't stop to examine their living quarters; for the time it was sufficient that they were to share the same tent-house; but hastily removed the worst of the travel stains and followed their guide with alacrity farther up the clearing. "I'm afraid we can't offer you much in the way of supper," said Mr. Gould apologetically. "Fact is, we've scarcely got going well yet; Camp only

started at noon, you know; and things are still a bit unsettled in the kitchen. But I fancy 'Pop' will find something for you."

The dining hall proved to be a large building, open on three sides save for wooden shutters which could be lowered into place when necessary. The fourth side, or end, connected with the kitchen by means of a wide opening above a counter, as well as by a door. Flags and banners hung from the rafters and six long trestle tables and two smaller ones stood beneath. Since it was now dark one of the hanging lamps had been lighted over one of the smaller tables, and to this the councilor conducted them. Over the serving counter they could see a good-sized kitchen, and on the big range at the far side a stewpan emitted steam from under a tin lid. On the table at which the boys drew up was spread the rudiments of a meal; bread, butter, stewed fruit, plain cake, a tall pitcher of milk. Tod viewed the setting with approval, but his thoughts reverted to the stewpan from which came a subtle and delicious fragrance. Mr. Gould raised his voice.

"Oh, 'Pop'! Company's arrived!" he announced.

From the kitchen came the sound of a chair scraping on the floor and then a stout youth in a very soiled apron appeared beyond the counter.

"'Pop's' up to his tent," he said. "I got some stew here, though."

"Fine!" applauded the councilor. "Fetch it along, Archie."

So Archie, who, it seemed, was the cook's helper, deposited two plates of stew on the ledge and Mr. Gould and Stuart bore them to the table. Tod realized too late to be of assistance that Archie's duties ceased at the counter. The stew looked good and smelled wonderfully, and there was plenty of it, but just as Tod was raising the first morsel to his lips the other two arrivals appeared in tow of still another councilor and, because he knew that introductions would ensue, he regretfully set his fork down. This new councilor was named Rhodes and Tod and Stuart arose and shook hands with him. Then they shook hands with Nason and Pillsbury. And then, since it seemed impolite to start eating before the later arrivals, they sat and suffered while two more helpings of stew were transferred from stove to table. They were glad that the two councilors seated themselves and remained during the repast, for they were much too hungry for polite conversation. Mr. Gould and Mr. Rhodes attended to the conversation and it was only necessary for Tod to speak thrice. Once he said, "Yes, thanks," once, "Pass the butter, please," and once, "No, thank you." Nason, however, seemed

to be able to talk and satisfy his hunger simultaneously, keeping up his third of a triangular conversation with the councilors. Tod wondered at this accomplishment but didn't try to emulate it. Pillsbury ate for the most part in a silence as complete as Tod's, stealing swift glances about the table and revealing a length of arm truly remarkable. Toward the end of the repast—Tod refused a "second" of stew although he could have eaten it with gusto—Pillsbury reached past Stuart once too often. Perhaps it was by accident that, just as the youth's freckled hand pounced by Stuart's tumbler, Stuart's knife, well laden with butter, happened to be in the way. Stuart apologized very nicely and Pillsbury was able to remove most of the butter with a paper napkin. Tod caught a reflection of his own suppressed amusement in Nason's gray eyes. Even Mr. Rhodes appeared to derive secret satisfaction from the incident.

Satisfied if not replete, Tod and Stuart found their way back to Number 6 tent and donned sweaters; not an easy task since the only light came from the solitary lantern on the porch of a neighboring building. Of course, as they learned later, they might have lighted a lantern swinging above their heads in the darkness, but they didn't know of its existence then. Abandoned by Mr. Gould now, they didn't quite know what to do

with themselves. From a brightly illumined building beyond the dining hall came the sound of voices and the rival music of a piano and a radio, but by mutual consent they put off facing the crowd in there and started on an objectless stroll toward the lake. Here and there a tent-house was dimly lighted and apparently inhabited, but most of the fellows were in the recreation hall. Once two hurrying youths appeared suddenly from the darkness, said "Hello" and went past, up the hill, conversing energetically. The lake was a dark mirror reflecting an occasional wan star. Off-shore a little way several lights twinkled, and Stuart recalled that they had passed a small island just before reaching the landing. Standing on the pier, they could, after a moment or two, discern it as a darker mass against the uncertain gloom of the farther distance. Under the pier the water lapped ceaselessly, and along the beach tiny waves whispered. An adjacent point of land loomed to their left, and presently, as they stood there, some one started a fire on the opposite side of the cove. The voices of the folks over there reached them quite clearly. The breeze of earlier evening had died away; or else the point served as a barrier. In either case the water was quite calm hereabouts and the world still.

"Sort of a lonely place, if you ask me," mur-

mured Tod. "I suppose it's different in the daytime, though. Let's go back."

They didn't reach the recreation hall just then, however, for somewhere in the darkness a bugle-call rang out and a moment or two later they found themselves opposing a stream of youths quartering down the slope. "Camp fire, you guys!" called a passer, and they turned their course and followed. About every second fellow carried an electric torch, something that neither Tod nor Stuart had thought to provide himself with. Presently they no longer needed the aid of the torches, for down at the edge of the beach, where the shore curved around the cove, an orange light shone, and there came a cheerful crackling as the flames gathered headway. Sparks shot upward in the still air, floated amidst the darkness. The water of the cove reflected the ruddy glare.

Mr. Gould evolved from the confusion and once more took the newcomers in tow. There were benches arranged in a rough arc around three sides of the fire, and on one of these they found seats. Several boys who stood by were introduced, but to Tod's relief no ceremony was made of their induction into the camp circle. Two fellows with long poles tended the fire, adding fresh fuel from time to time, thrusting back wayward fagots, and the councilor explained that what

was known as camp-fire detail had fallen to them and that it had been their duty to gather the fuel, pile it and set it alight when the bugle blew. To-morrow two others would take over the job. "There's a list posted every morning on a board outside the Office," said Mr. Gould, "which gives the details for the day: boats, police, mail, camp-fire and so on. You chaps probably won't draw any duties to-morrow, though."

"What time do we get up, sir?" asked Stuart.

"First bugle's at seven. Second's at half-past, and that's breakfast call. Some of the fellows like to take a plunge before they dress, and you'll find time enough if you pile out promptly."

"How's the water, though?" inquired Tod. "Isn't it pretty cold at that time of day?"

"No different than later, or very little. Sometimes the air's a bit chilly, though! Morning dip isn't compulsory, however."

"You going to try it, Stu?" asked Tod.

"Sure," replied the other, stoutly. "Makes you feel fine, I'll bet."

"Well, I'll see how I feel. Maybe if the sun's out and all like that—"

"You'll probably get the habit," laughed the councilor. "Most of us have it."

What took place about the camp-fire at Graystone that evening was probably very similar to what was taking place at a hundred other camps,

but to Tod and Stuart the proceedings were novel and consequently interesting. There was a little talk by the Director, or "Chief" as the fellows called him, in which he doubtless said about what he had said at eleven previous first-night gatherings there. Tod, listening and watching the firelight reflected on his glasses and glowing on his round, kindly countenance, decided that the Doctor was all right. A brisk clapping of hands followed his remarks, and then, in turn, five of the six councilors spoke; one in regard to swimming and water sports, one about baseball and the formation of the camp teams, one about tennis and the necessity for considerable labor on the part of those expecting to use the courts in getting them back in condition. Mr. Pope, the oldest of the councilors, announced that every fellow must report to him in the morning for his physical examination, and, lastly, Mr. Buckley called on those who wished to arrange for coaching in any of their school studies to confer with him at ten o'clock. There was singing after that, with orchestral accompaniment by several banjo and mandolin players whose mistakes or lapses had no deterrent effect on the vocalists. And, finally, all repeated the Lord's Prayer, and the assemblage broke up.

When Tod and Stuart reached their tent they found it lighted and were able to get their first

real survey of it. While the word tent was the accepted name for it at the camp, it was in reality more house than tent. Standing well above the ground and reached by two steps, it was double-floored, with solid walls about four feet high. Above the walls there was a three-foot opening all around guarded by copper screening. The roof extended well beyond the walls, but when the protection of the overhanging eaves was not sufficient to keep out the rain, light shutters could be raised into place. The door was covered with wire screening and a canvas curtain could be raised or lowered at will. Each of the tent-houses—there were twelve in all—held five iron cots and accommodated as many boys. There was a table down the center, two short benches which were stowed beneath it when not in use, and a lantern for light. That practically completed the furnishings, if we except a black-and-gray-checked linoleum on the floor. In each corner there were hooks for camp clothing, a shelf above each cot was supposed to hold toilet articles and a rack below it was designed for towels. Other possessions were accommodated in a shallow fiber case kept beneath the cot. Trunks, bags and all other luggage containers were to be tagged and stored in a room for that purpose up at the Office.

There were two boys already in Number 6

when Tod and Stuart entered, and to Tod's relief Pillsbury was not one of them. Nor did he make his appearance later in the form of the other occupant of the tent. During the quarter of an hour remaining before taps sounded the five got acquainted. Two of the number, "Punk" Wallace and Joe Graves, were veterans of the camp. "Punk" was eighteen and Joe a year younger. Tom Greene was a new member. He was Stuart's age, a rather stout youth with a good-natured countenance and a dimple in each pink cheek. Punk was a big chap with a good deal of rebellious dark hair and an incipient mustache. He had a deep voice and a slow manner of speech that amounted almost to a drawl. Tod noted that Joe Graves appeared to hold him in great respect and deferred to him constantly. Joe was a slim boy of medium size, rather light complexioned, good-looking, talkative and quick to laughter. On the whole, Tod decided, a decent enough lot, his tent companions. He wondered what had become of Pillsbury. Somehow Pillsbury had awakened an intense antipathy in him and he went to bed feeling extremely grateful to whatever authority had kept them apart in their quarters.

Taps sounded and Punk Wallace extinguished the light. "Good night, you fellows," he said as his cot creaked under him. Tod murmured a

response, concerned for the moment over the unaccustomed feeling of woolen blankets. He couldn't recall ever having slept without sheets before, but he guessed he'd get used to it soon enough. Everything became intensely still until he discovered that what had seemed silence was really a ceaseless undertone of tiny sounds; the faint stirrings of leaves and grasses, the crepitations of countless insects, the lapping of the distant water, eerie creakings of the boards about him. Once a bird trilled a few notes, sleepily as if in dreaming, and once, from very far away, came the shrill whistle of a locomotive. The brown blanket tickled his chin and Tod thrust it away. Then, discovering that the night air about him was surprisingly cool, he pulled it back again. He wondered if he would ever get sleepy. Some one was already breathing in the measured fashion that told of slumber. If only it wasn't so still— He tried turning over on his right side and almost went out of the narrow bed. Suddenly Greene began to snore horribly. Tod knew then that he would never be able to sleep, that so long as that awful snoring kept up—

He awoke to sunlight and a crisp, early-morning breeze.

CHAPTER IV

A THREE-CORNERED FRIENDSHIP

Two days later Tod and Stuart were thoroughly shaken down to life at Graystone. If either had arrived with the notion that he had embarked on a summer career of idleness, he was speedily disillusioned. Idleness was just about the last thing to be found there. If it is true that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, it is also a fact that with nothing to do save play the same Jack becomes even worse than dull. The work at Camp Graystone wasn't known as work, but after Tod and another youth had gathered wood for the evening's camp-fire a few days later and piled it in the scientific fashion prescribed the first named knew that he had been doing something, call it what you liked! There were sixty-three boys at Graystone that summer, and of that number at least half were assigned duties each day. There was a detail of from one to four fellows for every possible duty; a camp detail who swept and cleaned the recreation hall, administration building—"Office" in local parlance—and dining hall, a shore detail who looked after the boat-house and boats, a color detail

whose business it was to raise and lower the flags, a police detail who saw that the grounds were clean, a lamp detail, a mail detail and several others. There were, also, two orderlies to whom the details reported and who, in turn, reported to the officer of the day, one of the councilors. And there was an alternate ready to assume the office and duties of any one unable to perform and a scribe to write down the history of the day.

Each tent was in charge of a captain—Punk Wallace held the honor in Number 6—whose duty it was to see that the bed-clothes were hung out to air for an hour each morning, that the beds were subsequently made up again, that the lantern was filled and trimmed, that the tent was clean and in order and that the "yard" about it was immaculate. At nine-thirty the officer of the day made his round of inspection. If he found aught amiss with one of the domiciles the fact was entered in his records and the captain of that tent was held responsible. Every Saturday a gray pennant bearing a big crimson G was awarded to the tent having made the best record during the preceding week for neatness. The pennant was greatly coveted and, when won, was planted on its polished staff in front of the premises.

However, although at first Tod and Stuart

were a trifle aghast at the number of rules to be observed and surprised at the variety of duties to be performed, they soon found that the rules were not onerous and that the duties were not difficult. Sometimes, having planned one's morning according to one's personal tastes and predilections, it was disappointing to learn that one was down on the orders of the day as a member of the camp or fire or shore detail. And Tod soon discovered that nothing short of illness or enforced absence could alter the orders. Still, no duty demanded more than two hours of the fifteen between first bugle and last.

At Graystone one lived by the bugle. It blew first at seven and then at half-past. It blew again at eleven for morning swim and at twelve-thirty for dinner. It blew at five-twenty for colors and ten minutes later for supper. It blew at eight for camp-fire and, finally, at nine-thirty it "blew the lights out." To Tod getting up at seven was silly and going to bed at half-past nine was even sillier, but after a few days he got used to the program; indeed, it wasn't long before he was quite ready to "hit the hay" without waiting for taps to sound; and, having slept soundly for well over nine hours, he was just as ready to get up when reveille came. He got to like that quick race down the hill to the lake in the early morning and the nerve-thrilling plunge from the swim-

ming dock so well that when, as happened but twice or thrice during that summer, he wasn't able to take part in the proceedings he felt all wrong for hours.

There was another feature of the daily program objected to by Tod for a while. That was siesta. Siesta came at one-thirty and lasted for an intolerable half-hour. Every fellow was required to lie on his bunk, refrain from reading or talking and try earnestly to sleep. Tod never succeeded in actually sleeping, but once or twice on very hot days he did pass off into a sort of comatose condition in which his mind ceased functioning, or at least ran on low. Morning swim was compulsory for all, but in the afternoon one could take it or leave it alone. Generally one took it, returning to the water gladly at four or half-past after strenuous play ashore or afloat. From two o'clock until colors sounded at twenty minutes past five one's time was one's own, except that, having signed up for baseball or tennis or aquatics, one was in duty bound to render a specified period of practice.

Tod and Stuart were both trying for the camp baseball team, although, since there appeared to be any number of fellows more accomplished at that sport on the squad, their chances of making it didn't look overly bright. They had, also, entered for canoeing honors, but, it must be con-

fessed, less from motives of patriotism than from a desire to enjoy the privilege accorded those who signed up in aquatics. There were fourteen canoes at camp—excluding several privately owned craft—and that number was insufficient to supply the demand. If you were accepted by Councilor Jim Pope as a possible performer with a paddle in the future competitions with rival camps you were assured of getting a canoe any time you wanted it. Joe Graves had appraised them of this privilege—"cinch" Joe called it—and they had instantly decided to devote much time to canoeing. As for tennis, although they each played the game and liked it, they refrained from attempting to make the team. If, as seemed fairly likely, they failed at baseball they might, presumably, still edge into the other sport. They got a game occasionally, however, when, as infrequently happened, one of the four courts was unoccupied. They also devoted some time and effort to volley-ball. Volley-ball at Graystone was frankly the junior's game, but after supper the older fellows took possession of the court—letting the youngsters participate if there remained room for them—and spent an hilarious hour there. Sometimes so many participated that the ball never had a chance!

After the first day in camp there was never any question as to Tod liking the place, and the same was true of Stuart. They liked it immensely;

liked going about all day in the simple costume of shirt, shorts and turned-down hose; liked sleeping with the night air blowing around them; liked the food; liked their fellows—most of them, anyway; liked the Chief and the councilors; liked, in short, everything about the camp. Secretly, Stuart thought he looked rather well in his camp togs, and had Tod take half a dozen snap-shots of him while he posed in various places and attitudes; leaning nobly on a canoe paddle, perched picturesquely on a vine-clad stump—he didn't discover until the next day that the vine was poison ivy—seated meditatively on the steps of Number 6, and so on. Sometimes he wore just a gray sleeveless shirt and shorts, crimson hose and ankle-length sneakers; in other pictures he had on his khaki hiking breeches and the gorgeous gray coat-sweater with red trimmings and his gray cloth cap with the crimson band. The shirt—it was really a light woolen jersey—bore a nice big G in crimson and the sweater had the same insignia on a small white shield on the left side. Either costume was extremely fetching and became Stuart, and he sent off numerous snap-shots to relatives and friends. Of course Tod had himself taken, too, but his shorts were not short enough to look their best and his coat-sweater was a size at least too large, and he wasn't nearly so proud of the camera's work as Stuart was.

I have said that Tod and Stuart liked most of

their companions, but on second thoughts that is a fairly large order. Quite naturally some of the sixty fellows remained practically unknown to them save by sight all summer and they couldn't have told you whether they liked those chaps or didn't. Their closest friends were the three other occupants of Tent Number 6, several fellow-members of the baseball squad and a smattering of another half-dozen encountered here and there under various circumstances. Besides those they had a less intimate acquaintance with a score or so more and a speaking acquaintance with still others, some of whose names they knew. Among the fairly intimate friends after a week at camp was included Tudor Nason. Both Tod and Stuart had taken to Nason at first sight that afternoon on the *Saranetta,* and Stuart subsequently went out of his way on an occasion to become better acquainted. It had taken courage, for there was that about Nason which deterred strangers from seeking acquaintance. However, he had met Stuart's overtures quite half-way and some degree of intimacy had developed and in the natural course of events included Tod. The fact that Tudor occupied quarters on "South Street," as the opposite row of tents was known, somewhat delayed matters. Between "South Street" and "North Street" lay the whole width of the camp grounds and an intense camp rivalry. Of

course "Northers" did visit "Southers," and vice versa, but nevertheless when the dweller on one street dropped in on a neighbor for a chat that neighbor was very likely to be a resident of the same double row of tents. When "South Street" flew the Tent Trophy "North Street" was disconsolate, and when the gray-and-crimson standard flaunted in front of a "North Street" tent "Southers" gnashed their teeth and set about recovering it. It was a strong rivalry but healthy.

Fate had been unkind to Tudor Nason, or, at least, Tod thought so. It had placed Tudor in Tent 4 and given him Armitage Pillsbury as a tent-mate. Tudor only smiled non-committingly when Tod expressed sympathy, or, pressed for an expression of his opinion, merely said, "He hasn't bothered me any." Tod readily believed that, for Tudor appeared to have the ability to choose his own afflictions. If he didn't want to associate with Pillsbury, even though Pillsbury occupied the next cot, you felt that he would somehow more or less gracefully manage not to. Pillsbury had already acquired a nickname. He was known as The Pill. "I don't know who gave it to him," said Tudor, smilingly, one morning as he and Tod and Stuart swung their legs from the steamer dock, "but it was, of course, blatantly obvious." (One fascinating thing about Tudor was his use of unusual but perfectly appropriate

words, or a combination of them.) "He doesn't seem to object, either," he added.

"Hasn't sense enough," said Tod. "I can't stand that fellow. He sits at the next table, Number 3, right where I can see him every time I look up, and it's awful. The way he eats—gee, you'd think he was raised in an orphan asylum!"

"I've always fancied that orphan asylums were rather particular about table manners," said Tudor, smiling. "Pillsbury suggests to me that he may have received his early training in a zoo."

Tod chuckled, but Stuart said: "Oh, well, what's the good of knocking the poor guy? Maybe it isn't altogether his fault. And"—he winked surreptitiously at Tudor—"anyhow, he can pitch a baseball rather well."

Tod grinned ruefully. "He certainly can," he admitted. "Yesterday he struck me out twice in practice. Gosh, I couldn't hit him at all! He's got a couple of curves that would fool Babe Ruth."

"Why don't you try for the nine, Nason?" Stuart asked.

"Oh, I'm quite useless in baseball. Can't throw or hit or catch. Fact is, I'm close to a total loss in any sort of athletic stunt. Only thing I've ever been able to do is run a bit. I did the half in two-thirteen and a fifth last May at school. That's nowhere near the record, but it was good enough to win me first place."

"Sounds good," said Tod. "Why isn't running the half-mile an athletic stunt?"

"Oh, I suppose it is, only I never think of running as being important. I mean to say, it's just something any fellow can do; like walking or swimming or—or whistling."

"Well, I heard a fellow once who whistled so much better than most chaps that he was making a living at it on the stage," said Stuart. "Any fellow can run, of course, but not every fellow can do a half-mile in two-thirteen, or even two-thirty. I'm one of them. You play tennis, don't you?"

"Play at it. I'm not much good. An infant could get my serve."

"That's the sort of a serve I'm looking for," answered Stuart. "I can't get Tod's very often. Like to play me some time?"

"Why, yes, if you can stand it. At school fellows are a bit shy of me, I'm so easy."

"What school is that?" inquired Tod politely.

"Melton Academy. Ever hear of it?"

"*What?* Why—why, we're Nostrand fellows!"

"Me hated enemy!" muttered Stuart, scowling fiercely.

"Really?" Tudor Nason didn't seem nearly so impressed as the others thought he should have been. "I'm in upper middle at Melton; will be next fall, I mean. What's your class?"

"Same," said Stuart. "Were you over to the football game last fall?"

Tudor nodded. "Awfully good game, wasn't it? Remember how our left end, Traubel, fumbled that forward-pass? Silly ass! If he'd held onto it we'd have won, I suppose."

"And did you see the boat race?" asked Stuart.

"Oh, shut up," muttered Tod. "Sounds as if you were rubbing it in."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Tudor unaffectedly. "Nostrand was high gun last year and no mistake. Took about everything, didn't she? Football, baseball, rowing, the whole program? Fair enough, I fancy. We'd had our good years, too, you know. And then there's always another year coming, eh?"

"Of course. But I wasn't thinking about rubbing it in, as Tod says. I only started to say that if you were at Lake Hastings you saw this little shrimp in the Nostrand shell. He was our cox."

"Of course!" exclaimed Tudor. "I remember the name now, but I didn't think to connect it with you, Hale. Anyway, I didn't know you chaps were Nostrand fellows. I seem to be surrounded by the enemy!"

"I suppose," said Stuart slowly, "that Melton's really a pretty good school, isn't it?"

Tudor smiled. "Well, we think so."

"Yes. Well, that's what makes it so—so funny," went on Stuart musingly. "I mean—well, take any school, Nason. Fellows who belong to it think it's far and away the best in the country and that all the others are just—well, second-rankers; especially the big rival. Now—"

"Oh, don't be so—" Tod sought for a word, failed and tried to imagine what Tudor Nason would use. "So insular," he ended triumphantly. Stuart blinked.

"Bulltoads! Who's insular? Nason knows what I'm getting at. We fellows at Nostrand look on Melton as—as—"

"We don't; we just pretend to. And I dare say Melton does the same. We pretend that we've got it all over Melton in every way, and that our crowd is—is a superior bunch, and all that poppycock, but we don't really believe it. I guess it's human nature to think best of your own school or town or country. Only," Tod concluded sagely, "there's no sense in being too blamed conceited."

"For the sake of peace," said Tudor, "let's agree that both Nostrand and Melton are all right, as, of course, they must be. If they weren't they wouldn't be filled every year. I'll try to think no worse of you fellows for wearing the maroon and you try to forget—"

"Look here!" interrupted Tod. "Didn't we

lose the half-mile in the track meet last Spring? Were you the fellow who—who—"

"Must have been," acknowledged Tudor. "Anyway, they said I came in first. Does that render the entente cordiale more difficult, Hale?"

"Gosh, no! I was just thinking that— Well, it's like this. We three guys are all— What I mean is—" He came to an embarrassed stop.

Stuart grinned unkindly. "He's trying to call himself a hero, I guess, and can't do it without including us."

"No, but you know what I mean," pleaded Tod. "We've all done something successfully. In an athletic way, you know. Stu played on the baseball team," he added for Tudor's enlightenment. "And you were a point-winner at the track meet. Well, look here then; why can't we do something here at camp?"

"Why not?" asked Stuart. "Only, just what?"

The light of inspiration faded from Tod's brown eyes. "Well, I don't know," he answered a bit flatly. "Something. If we sort of pulled together—"

"I'm afraid three's rather an awkward number," said Tudor amiably. "Better leave me out of it. I can't think of anything a team of three fellows could enter for."

"I didn't mean just that," said Tod vaguely. "Maybe it wouldn't be athletics."

"What wouldn't?" inquired Stuart.

"What—what we'd do," replied Tod, frowning. "I've got to think about it."

"Sure. Go ahead. You sit here and think, old chap. Nason and I are going to take a dip in the briny. There goes assembly now. Say, if Ty keeps on he'll be able to blow that old bugle fairly decently by the time camp breaks up!"

CHAPTER V

TOD GETS A LETTER

"Gol-ding it," said Tod plaintively a few evenings later as he and Stuart sat on the steps of Number 6 tent, cooling off after a vigorous scramble about the volley-ball court and waiting for Councilor Tyson's bugle to announce camp-fire, "that Pillsbury chap's getting on my nerves!"

"What's The Pill been doing to you?" asked Stuart, the sympathy in his voice marred by the amused twinkle in his eyes.

"Well, he's been haunting me," said Tod dramatically. "If he doesn't stop it I'll—I'll—"

"Haunting you?" repeated the other interestedly. "How do you mean, haunt—"

"Looking at me! Following me around! Trying to—to pick up an acquaintance! He's always at it, Stu. Take it at grub time. Every time I look up from my plate he's staring over at me like—like I was a long-lost brother or something!"

"Brother?" said Stuart doubtfully. "Surely you don't suspect any relationship! Look here,

isn't it more likely that The Pill lost a dog once that he was mighty fond of and—"

"Lost a—I'll dog you, you silly ass! Be serious, can't you? It's no laughing matter, you smart aleck. I simply can't stand the fellow, and here, of late, he's taken to shining up to me. Today he came over to where I sat at the field; you saw him, didn't you? Well—"

"I thought you called him over," said Stuart innocently.

After the other had picked himself up and regained his position on the step, Tod went on plaintively: "He came across and sat down on the end of the bench, or plank, or whatever it is, and there he sat for ten minutes. I didn't look at him, but I knew pesky well what he was doing."

"What was he doing?" asked Stuart conversationally.

"Looking at me! He's always doing it, I tell you."

"Well, what did he say?"

"Say? He didn't *say* anything, of course. He just looked. That's as far as he ever gets. Some day, though"—Tod's voice fell gloomily— "some day he's going to speak, confound him!"

"Well, my dear Todwick, what harm is there in the poor chap's looking at you? Maybe you look like some one he used to know, some one he

was fond of; like a d—d—" Stuart edged away —"like a dear old uncle."

"You didn't start to say uncle," charged Tod menacingly.

"I did! Honest, I did, Tod. Besides, he probably never owned a dog. The simple explanation is that The Pill has taken a liking to you, old chap. You just can't explain likings. He wants to know you, to profit by association with you. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if, when you two fellows become really thick, you could do a lot for The Pill. Reform his manners, for one thing, Tod."

"If I do it'll be with a club," growled the other.

"Oh, come now, you don't mean that," spoke Stuart soothingly. "You know perfectly well that you find his devotion touching, that your hard heart is melting—"

"If you don't want your face pushed in," remarked Tod harshly, "you'll shut up. There goes the silly old bugle. Come on."

Later, when the fire had died out and the fellows were straggling back up the slope, Tod lost track of Stuart. Not until a minute or two before taps sounded did Stuart return to Number 6. "Where," demanded Tod, interrupting a long and complicated narrative of Joe Graves', "have you been, Stu?"

"Over at Number 4," answered Stuart a bit

breathlessly as he began to disrobe. "Lost track of you down there and walked over with Tudor."

"Hobnobbing with the enemy, eh?" asked Joe severely, balked of reaching the climax of his yarn. "We've a traitor in our midst, Punk."

"Shoot him at sunrise," drawled Punk sleepily from his cot. "Who's Tudor, Stu?"

"Tudor Nason. You know him. He was in here the other evening." He turned to Tod. "Pillsbury was there, too," he added carelessly. Tod winced. "Quite an interesting chap when you get to know him. Talks quite amusingly. Knows a lot of baseball."

"That the fellow they call The Pill?" asked Tommy Greene. "Heck, he's the limit. He's at my table, and if you want to see something funny you watch him get away with a wedge of pie! Boy, he's the most original pie-eater you ever saw!"

"I see enough of him without watching him eat pie," grumbled Tod. "Why didn't you tell me you were going over there?" he demanded of Stuart.

"Because—here, who's got my pajamas? Tommy, if you— Oh, all right, here they are. What was it you asked, Tod? Oh, well, I didn't tell you I was going over there because you got lost in the shuffle and I couldn't see you anywhere. Besides—"

"Put out the light, Stu," muttered Punk. "You're the last up, and there goes 'Go to sleep.' Pronto, kid, before we get socked a black mark. We haven't had the trophy yet and it's time we had. Night, you guys."

The *Saranetta* arrived twice daily at the camp landing. It was on her two o'clock visit, however, that she brought the bulk of the mail. From the wharf, importantly borne by the two boys of the mail detail, it went to the Office and was there sorted. (Being on the mail detail gave you the much-sought privilege of terminating siesta ten minutes before your companions.) Promptly at two o'clock the tents emptied themselves and the fellows hot-footed it up to the Office. Sometimes the mail was there ahead of them, but more often it arrived at about the same moment. The day after Stuart's evening visit to Tudor Nason, Mr. Rhodes, one of whose duties was to receive, sort and deliver the mail, was well along in his task when Tod and Stuart, with the other members of Tent 6, crowded into the already well-filled room. Some of the fellows were making purchases at the little glass show-case wherein a delectable array of candy and chewing-gum made its appeal, but the bulk of the attendance was watching the councilor's movements in rapt attention. There was an unceasing murmur of low-voiced comment and speculation. "Bet you I'll get a letter this

time, dog-gone it!" "Gosh, my folks must be all dead! I haven't had a word from 'em—" "If dad sends the money-order, Jim, I'll pay you back that quarter." "Look at the long blue one! Looks like a summons, eh?" "Shucks, that's Harry Nebury's. His father always uses those big blue envelopes." "Bet you anything that square package is mine, Ned." "Gee golly, the mater didn't send my tennis racket again!" "There's one for me!" "Never mind the papers, Syd! Nobody reads 'em!" "Is that so, Larry? Well, I want mine. Got to have the news from the old home town, laddie!" "Huh, I should worry. If you don't get 'em you don't have to answer 'em." "Wish I didn't! Every week, regular, or—"

"Mail's up! Ackroyd!"

"Allen! Hold on, son, here's a package, too."

"Didn't I get anything, please, sir?" asked a disappointed youth.

"No, Adams, not this eve!" Syd Rhodes' jest amused the others, but brought only a rueful smile from young Adams. "Barnard! Barnard! Not here? Who'll take it? All right, Sam."

Down through the C's and the D's and finally to the H's went the councilor, and then Tod stepped up and got two epistles and retired outside to the veranda with them. One was from his mother. He recognized both stationery and

writing, but the other— He turned it over in puzzlement. It was a plain, cheap white envelope, without a stamp, and the penciled address looked like the effort of a four-year-old child: "Mr. G. T. Hale, Camp Graystone, City." "City!" muttered Tod contemptuously as he tore the end off. Totally unaware that he was being observed with deep interest through the open window behind him by two whispering youths, he allowed his countenance to express all the incredulous resentment he felt when he had read the enclosure. His frown was deep, and it deepened as he once more and less hurriedly perused the ill-written lines. Finally, with something of a start, he glanced about him warily and crumpled the disturbing missive just as Stuart and Tudor lounged through the doorway. Stuart was apparently interested to the exclusion of all else in a letter from home, but Tudor, who had, it seemed, drawn only a package of papers which he swung in one hand, asked: "Bad news, Hale?"

"Huh? No. Why?" replied Tod rather absent-mindedly.

"Oh, I thought you looked a bit feazed. Well, see you chaps later."

He nodded and went off, swinging his papers, and after he was fairly out of hearing Tod exclaimed explosively: "Yes, sure!"

"Eh?" inquired Stuart, looking up with a frown from his reading. "What's sure?"

"Nason said he'd see us later," explained Tod. He fell into step beside the other and walked toward the recreation hall. At last Stuart returned his letter to its envelope, thrust it into a pocket and asked: "Folks all right?"

"Fine." Then Tod remembered that his mother's letter was still unopened and that he didn't know whether they were fine or otherwise. "I mean I don't know," he amended. "Haven't read it yet. Something—something perfectly awful has happened, Stu." His voice fell to tragic depths. "Read this, will you?" He loosened his fingers on the crumpled wad of paper and impatiently smoothed it out. "Hold on," he added. "Not here! Let's go up in the woods."

"Up in the woods!" protested Stuart. "Are you crazy? It's as hot as Tophet there! What's the matter with this?" He seated himself in a hammock on the shady side of the wide porch and after an apprehensive look had persuaded Tod that none of the fellows inside the wide hall were within hearing distance, he sank down at the other's side.

"All right, only don't read it out loud," he muttered.

"Gosh!" Stuart ejaculated. "What is it?" He

studied the inscription on the rumpled envelope and glanced inquiringly at his companion. Tod shrugged his shoulders hopelessly. Stuart drew forth the enclosure and, frowning over the penciled lines, read:

"Dear Hale: I have been trying to find courage to speak to you for a week, but I always get cold feet when the time comes. Maybe you have noticed me around and wondered. I don't know many fellows here and those I have met aren't sympathetic. I liked you the first time I saw you, which was that day on the steamer when we were coming up here, and I've wanted to know you better ever since. Only, as I've said, I don't seem to have the courage to speak. I've always been able to size up people pretty well and my opinion of you is that you're sympathetic and kind-hearted and would act friendly if you knew what it would mean to me. So I'm going to ask you to—"

"Stu, if you laugh," whispered Tod passionately, "I'll bust you one right here!"

"I—I thought I was going to sneeze," replied Stuart faintly, accounting for the slight twitching of his shoulders. After a moment devoted to self-control he went on:

"So I'm going to ask you to let me know if it will be all right for me to speak to you. You don't have to answer this or say anything, but this (Thursday) afternoon you can just put a bit

of clover in your buttonhole when you come to the ball field. It won't have to be a four-leaved clover, but it will mean good luck for You Know Who."

After he had finished reading Stuart continued for a moment to stare at the sheet of paper. Tod viewed him suspiciously. But when Stuart raised his head and turned to regard his sorely tried friend the latter could find no fault with his expression. Stuart was as sympathetically concerned as Tod could have possibly desired.

"Poor fellow," sighed Stuart.

"Huh?" Tod viewed the other doubtfully. "Who?"

"Why, Pillsbury." Stuart raised innocent blue eyes. "Oh, I realize that you don't like him, Tod, but, hang it, you know, this thing"—he tapped the letter—"is pathetic!"

"Pathetic!" exploded Tod. "It's crazy! He's—he's a nut! He must be! What—what—"

"Oh, of course it's a—well, it's an unusual stunt, old son, but, after all, you can see how badly he wants your friendship, and I suppose this was the only way he could think of. Of course he might have got Tudor Nason to introduce him, but I guess he's a bit scared of Tudor. Still, I can see your position—"

"Oh, you can?" snorted Tod. "I was wondering if it would occur to you!"

"Sure. It puts you sort of up against it,

doesn't it? I mean, you won't want to be—be brutal—"

"I won't, eh? You watch me!"

"No, you won't," said Stuart firmly. "You can't wound any fellow's feelings, Tod, and I know it. Besides, see what he says. 'My opinion of you is that you're sympathetic' "—Stuart remembered to refresh his memory by a look at the letter just in time to head off suspicion—" 'and kind-hearted and would act friendly—' "

"I know what he says," fumed Tod. "He's crazy! Look here, do you think for one moment that I'm going to parade over to the ball field wearing a four-leaf clover—"

"It doesn't have to be four-leaved, he says."

"—Just to please that—that rusty-faced idiot? Say, you're crazier than he is!"

"Well, what are you going to do then?" asked Stuart.

"I—I'm going to—I don't know yet, but it'll be something that'll shut him up for keeps," replied Tod darkly. "I don't like the cuss and I don't want to know him, and I won't have him hanging around, by golly! He—he doesn't look healthy."

"Oh, I think he's healthy," answered Stuart judicially. "It's just his looks. And his manners. Besides, Tod, you've been lonely yourself, maybe, and you ought to sympathize—"

"Well, I don't," muttered Tod. Nevertheless he was quite evidently weakening, and Stuart went on while the mood held.

"Look here, let's talk it over with Tudor, eh?"

"What for?" asked Tod, in allowable surprise. "What's Nason got to do with it?"

"Why, nothing, of course," replied the other hurriedly, "but he's pretty sensible, you know, and—and he's got pretty good ideas about such things."

"Yes, and he'll laugh at me," murmured Tod. "Any fellow would. I don't see why you didn't." He regarded Stuart suspiciously.

"Of course he won't laugh," the other assured him earnestly. "Why, it's all too—too pathetic to be laughed at."

"I wish you'd cut out that pathetic business," said Tod, sounding pathetic himself. "Besides, what is there to talk over?"

"Why, what course you're to pursue, of course. You've got to decide one way or another, Tod. Either you've got to make Pillsbury terribly unhappy or—or you've got to put yourself in a sort of a hole. Well, maybe not a hole exactly—"

"'Hole's' good enough," said Tod grimly. "I'd call it a hole! If I give that guy any encouragement he'll make life a burden to me. Even as it is—"

"Well, come on. Tudor said he was going to

get a boat and row out somewhere and read, but if we hurry we can get him, I guess."

"Well, but I don't see—" began Tod confusedly. "Hang it, it's my affair and not Tudor Nason's, Stu. Why worry him with it?"

"We need his advice," said Stuart decidedly.

"So's your old straw hat," Tod muttered. Nevertheless he followed.

They found Tudor just in the act of setting out alone in one of the gray skiffs. They climbed into it and, at Stuart's suggestion, rowed down the cove and sought a quiet, shaded stretch of water. Then Stuart handed Tudor the letter. Tod watched the reader's face anxiously and sternly, but Tudor wasn't the sort to allow his countenance to express his feelings. Not until he had finished the last line did he give any clew to his reactions. Then:

"How unbelievably naïve," he murmured.

"Huh?" asked Tod, uncertain of the word, subconsciously aware that, beside him, Stuart was making a funny gasping noise. "What did you say?"

"I said it was naïve," replied Tudor.

"Well, you didn't call it pathetic, anyway," said Tod with relief.

"In a way," pursued Tudor, gazing again at the rumpled sheet, "it's refreshing, isn't it? I admire the fellow's candor and ingenuousness."

Tod blinked rapidly. "He really deserves his reward, Hale, and I hope you're going to give it to him."

"If," answered Tod coldly, "you mean that I'm going to hunt up a bunch of clover and walk up to the field looking like—like Mrs. Astor's pet pony, you can hope some more. If the poor idiot wants to speak to me, all right; I'll try to stand it; but I'm hanged if I'm going to make a silly ass of myself!"

"But that's the difficulty, don't you see?" said Tudor. "He lacks the assurance to speak unless you give him some encouragement, Hale."

"I'm satisfied. Hope he does. I can't stand the poor fish. He looks like something dragged up from the lake!"

"But he can't help his looks," interposed Stuart. "Any more than you can, old scout. Besides, I dare say he wouldn't bother you much, after all. After he's known you a few days he will probably have had enough."

But Tod was adamant. If The Pill chose to be conversational he would try to be decent, but as to wearing clover leaves—nothing doing! When Tudor put back to the landing in order that his passengers might don baseball togs and report for practice he and Stuart, unseen of the third member of the party, exchanged a long, unfathomable look.

CHAPTER VI

GRAYSTONE DROPS A GAME

WHATEVER else was to be said of Armitage Pillsbury, alias The Pill, it couldn't be said that he wasn't at home on a baseball diamond. Especially it couldn't be said that he didn't have the knack of putting some very clever curves on a ball. In fact, The Pill showed to far better advantage in baseball uniform than in any other attire, and became on the mound a figure to command respect. It wasn't that his untidy reddish locks, thin, freckled face and pipe-stem limbs gained much from the cream-white, pencil-striped togs, but that he looked more at home in that dress; just as, having slipped an ungainly hand into a pitcher's glove, he lost something of his usual appearance of futility and took on consequence. Unlike most pitchers, The Pill could bat rather well, and, once on first, exhibited a positive genius for base running. His gait, even at its fastest, was an aimless, lop-sided lope, but it covered ground, and he had a disconcerting fashion of fading away, so to speak, some three yards from the base and only becoming visible

again when he had hooked one scuffed shoe to the sawdust sack.

That afternoon Tod found himself observing The Pill with new if no more pleasant interest. If the latter experienced disappointment when Tod arrived minus the sprig of clover he failed absolutely to show it; and Tod surreptitiously watched him to see. Nor did The Pill follow Tod with his eyes or seek his presence more than usual. Perhaps the rusty youth wasn't quite so concerned with Tod as the latter had grown to imagine. Like most of us, having accepted a theory as tenable Tod was inclined to let it run away with him a bit. After all, he was a pleasant, wide-awake, self-possessed appearing youth, good-looking if not handsome, eminently clean and healthy, and it might just have been that Pillsbury, who lacked most of those qualities, was attracted to him by them. As for The Pill's pursuit of Tod's society, why, even that may have been more apparent than real. After all, there weren't so many places to sit on the ball field. On a very warm day only one "bench"—two two-by-eight planks supported by bowlders—was in shade. Perhaps, then, The Pill was seeking comfort rather than propinquity with Tod, when, having pitched four innings of the practice game that Thursday afternoon, he wandered loosely over and seated himself a yard or more away.

But the idea didn't occur to Tod. Even though Vic Jordan sat between, Tod was uncomfortably conscious of The Pill's presence and secretly fumed. Why the dickens couldn't the idiot let him alone? He felt embarrassed, aware of Stuart's knowing, sympathetic glances that traveled from him to The Pill and back again, and embarrassment made him more than ever resentful. Somehow the fact that he was grudgingly forced to acknowledge Pillsbury's ability as a ball-player did nothing to assuage his antagonism; seemed, rather, to increase it. It was detestable to have to admire the athletic prowess of a fellow you disliked so thoroughly! He stored away another excuse for his prejudice.

That evening and frequently during the following day, Stuart and Tudor made themselves regular pests. They were forever asking about Pillsbury, and whether Tod had decided to relent and what effect his continued coldness was having on The Pill. At first Tudor and, less successfully, Stuart managed to maintain a gravity that deceived Tod, but by Friday noon he reached the conclusion that the two were not nearly as concerned with The Pill's happiness as they had been at first, and that they were now getting a good deal of amusement from him. Well, he didn't mind that much. It was really better than being made to feel that he was selfish and uncharitable

and several other things that it had occurred to the others to mention. Being able to laugh at The Pill and the incident of that silly note was a good deal of a relief. Of course Stuart and Tudor still pretended to be deeply concerned for Pillsbury; he couldn't make either of them frankly confess that they were ragging; but their pretensions didn't fool him any longer. When goaded too far he resorted to force of arms, and, since, in spite of his smallness, he was no mean adversary when put to it, he gained temporary peace.

Graystone had picked Camp Farwell as a first antagonist on the diamond, and on Saturday an invasion of the enemy from across the lake occurred. Graystone's ball field lay at the right of the camp and not far from the head of the cove. So far as the infield was concerned it couldn't have been much better. From back-stop to a point well beyond second base the ground was nearly level and the turf excellent. Beyond that, though, began a northward slope that extended to the little alder-bordered creek. The center fielder, if he played deep, was visible from the home-plate only as far earthward as the top of the middle letter on his shirt; unless, it goes without saying, he was a considerably taller fellow than Gordon Pettie. Visiting teams frequently grumbled a good deal about that outfield,

claiming, and not without reason, that an outfielder should be able to see more than just the head and shoulders of the batsman. Still, there it was, and after you got used to it you didn't mind so much; became accustomed to jumping upward from your toes when you were in doubt as to whether a runner had landed safely on base or just where your crouching companions in the infield were playing. Often enough signals from bench or from catcher didn't carry as far as the outer garden and extra bases resulted for runners.

Farwell had been selected for the first contest of the season because Farwell was well-known to be a weak team and Graystone would profit by the experience that competition supplies without sustaining a defeat. In the event Farwell proved weak, but Graystone proved weaker. If either team might have been supposed to understand the eccentricities of that down-hill outfield it was surely Graystone, and yet it was Lou Burnham, playing in left, who spilled the beans in the fifth inning. At the time the home aggregation was in the lead, and comfortably so. Don Lovell, recently-elected captain and clever second baseman, had poled out a nice three-bagger in the fourth inning when first and second sacks had been occupied, and had subsequently scored himself on a passed ball. Added to two other tallies, come at

Graystone cheered him hysterically

with difficulty in the preceding innings, those three runs totaled a nice big 5, and since, until the beginning of the fifth, Farwell had managed to score but twice, everything looked lovely.

The Pill had started for Graystone and had gone safely. In fact, he had had the enemy fairly eating out of his hand for four innings, turning in a very pretty brand of pitching and fielding his position nicely. But Councilor Tyson, the Graystone coach, decided to give Littleton the benefit of the last two innings of the six-frame game, and The Pill had retired, to an accompaniment of some applause that must have sounded a bit startling to him, and Gene had gayly set forth to hold the game in hand.

But Gene wasn't enjoying one of his good days. He got rid of the first batter when a high fly settled in Don Lovell's mitt, but the next fellow outguessed him and swung at the first delivery, which Gene had meant for a sneaky strike over the outer corner, and lambasted it over shortstop's head for a hit that might have been stretched into a double. The difficulty was that a low hit was difficult to judge as to distance once it came to earth beyond the level territory, and the runner decided on discretion. Then Gene got over-anxious and tried to cut the corners too closely, with the result that the succeeding batsman walked. After that a totally unexpected

bunt along third-base line was fielded carelessly, the throw drawing the first baseman off the bag and leaving the batter safe. And there was the stage set for tragedy and the visiting contingent of leather-lunged youths making the welkin ring!

"Ty" had made three changes in the team besides that of pitcher, and Dave James, small, youthful and practically untried was behind the plate. But Dave had the reddest of carroty red hair, and the runner on third should have noted that fact. Or perhaps he was told to try to steal home, although since there was only one out that doesn't seem likely. In any case, he did try; started off like a scared rabbit the instant Gene Littleton started the abbreviated wind-up he allowed himself when the bags were occupied, came ahead like a greyhound and made a really brilliant feet-first slide over the last few yards. Meanwhile a surprised Gene, momentarily unsteadied, had recovered and pitched. Not unnaturally the ball wasn't a strike, but it reached Dave only a foot wide, and Dave, having got his fingers around it, dropped to his knees at the left of the plate. Now Dave wasn't a husky youth and he wasn't more than two-thirds the size of the onrushing runner, but—he had red hair! Even though the runner's shoes were rubber-soled to-day and held no wicked-looking cleats, Dave had placed himself in a fair way to get

hurt. But he slapped the ball onto the enemy and held it tightly even after he went rolling over into the dust of the batter's box, and Graystone cheered him hysterically and the umpire waved the runner out.

And that was two of them away, and the home team fans breathed easier. Farwell presented a determined-looking, chunky third baseman next, and he let Gene pitch a ball and a strike and then a second ball before he took an interest in things. But when he did it was to some purpose. There was a healthy *crack* and he had dropped the bat and was speeding to first and the bases were emptying most promptly. Fellows tried to climb on each other's shoulders in order to follow the flight and learn the ultimate fate of that curving fly to left. It wasn't a long hit, after all, but was due to fall well back of third baseman and close to the foul-line, and Lou Burnham was a dependable fielder. Now Lou knew perfectly well, through an experience comprising last season and a week or more of this, that it is slower work running uphill than on the level. And he likewise knew that, except after a recent wet spell, the grass ahead of him was slippery even to corrugated rubber soles. Yet in spite of all this wisdom Lou fell down on his job. He missed the ball by inches only, but miss it he did, and by the time he had recovered it and fielded it frantically

to second and second baseman had relayed it desperately to third to catch the batsman, the damage was done. Three more runs were over and the score was tied. But Fate wasn't satisfied even then. Tom Kincaid made a nice catch of a hastily pegged ball and swung down at the sliding enemy. He missed him, loosed his hold of the ball and sent the latter arching back over the foul-line into the nearest clump of bayberry and long grass. Long before he had recovered the ball Farwell had scored her sixth tally.

Even then, Graystone need not have acknowledged defeat, for she still had two opportunities to tie or win, but that series of incidents took the starch out of her most thoroughly. No one reached first in the last of the fifth, after the foe had been retired finally by Captain Lovell's fine running catch of a tricky Texas Leaguer, while in her half of the sixth Farwell came within an ace of filling the bases for a second time and of adding more runs to her total. That she didn't was due not so much to Graystone's defense as to her own unfortunate propensity for headless base-running. It took most of the Maroon team to run the last out down between second and third, but the feat was eventually accomplished. The home rooters begged for action then, but the Farwell pitcher showed up better in the last inning than in any that had gone before, and one after another the

Graystone batters retired until it was all over save the cheering, and the visitors did the most of that!

Tod played shortstop in the last two innings that day, had one chance and accepted it and didn't get to bat. Stuart, though, went through the whole game handsomely in right field, got a hit and a sacrifice and doubtlessly cinched his position. In mess hall that evening there was much brave talk of what would happen when, later on, Graystone played at Farwell. If Ty hadn't taken Pillsbury out that afternoon things would have been different, and the next time—

If The Pill felt either disappointment or chagrin he gave no sign. Indeed, he ate supper with more than his usual gusto, his pursuit with a spoon of the last trace of peach preserve in his sauce-dish being audible at least two tables away.

Both Tod and Stuart were too tired to play volley-ball after supper, and so, picking up Tudor Nason, they took one of the maroon canoes and paddled round The Mound, the small knob of an island lying just outside the mouth of the cove. Tudor sat in the middle and encouraged the toilers. His request that they demonstrate their ability to propel the craft at racing speed, however, was not well received. Presently they shipped their paddles and let the canoe drift as it pleased in the placid water. The sun had slipped

from sight behind Mount Graystone, but the eastern sky was softly brilliant with rose and mauve, and the scarcely ruffled surface of the lake was shot with marvelous reflections. A mile away southward Bellinger's Island lay shadowed and saturnine against the fading glow of the sky. From where the canoe rocked gently the sentinel pine crowning the roughly conical skyline of the island assumed a spectral shape, and Tudor called attention to it. A branch projecting from the trunk just short of the top almost at a right angle looked for all the world like the arm of a gallows. In another moment, however, the canoe had drifted a little and the likeness was lost. Tod recalled the incident of the felt hat and recounted it for Tudor's benefit. The latter, it seemed, had not noted the island's owner on the steamer that afternoon, and the efforts of the others to picture the man as he had looked to them fell rather flat.

"Probably an invalid," commented Tudor. "Folks frequently go into the woods in summer to regain their health, you know."

"Sure," agreed Stuart flippantly, "that's why I'm up here. That's why The Pill's here, too. Tod, you've got to confess that The Pill pitched real ball to-day."

"What of it? I never said he couldn't pitch, did I? He's all right as a ball-player."

"Where does he come from, Tudor?" asked Stuart. "Ever hear him say?"

"No, but he left a letter on the table over in Number 4 yesterday and one couldn't very well help seeing the return address, which was that of some coal company—Zenith, I think was the name—at Tappen, Pennsylvania. Of course the letter may not have been from his own town, but I fancy it was."

"Well, I've never been in Tappen, Pennsylvania," said Stuart, "but we've got a fellow at Nostrand who comes from one of the coal towns over there and he's a pretty rough diamond. You know, Tod; Kranich, the big chap who roomed with Ned Parmenter."

Tod nodded. "Kranich's not a bad sort, though," he said reflectively. "Guess his folks are pretty well fixed, too. He has all sorts of clothes and things."

"What I was thinking," resumed Stuart, "was that maybe The Pill hasn't had quite the opportunities that most of us have had, if you see what I mean."

"For the love of Mike," said Tod plaintively, "talk about something besides Pillsbury! You fellows make me sick. If you think such a heap of him why in thunder don't you take him up? I'm not stopping you!"

"We would," replied Stuart in tones that

hinted reproach, "if he wanted us to, Tod. Tudor and I aren't—haven't the hearts to—to—"

"To repel the wistful advances of a simple and trusting soul," completed Tudor.

"Listen!" The canoe rocked alarmingly. "If you guys don't want to swim ashore you'd better close your traps!"

CHAPTER VII

THE PILL HAS CRAMPS

On Monday Tod drew guard duty. He and another, in this case Ted Connover, catcher on the nine, each manned a skiff and hovered off the landing during morning swim, maintaining a patrol about thirty yards out. Learning to swim was not compulsory at Camp Graystone, although every fellow was urged and expected to acquire the art before leaving. Inability to swim, though, didn't excuse any one from going into the water. There was plenty of shallow territory. Since no one who had not passed his fifty-yard test could take out a rowboat, and no one who had not demonstrated his ability to swim a quarter of a mile was allowed in a canoe, there were not many laggards. Instruction in swimming and diving was given by Mr. Pope and Mr. Rhodes, the latter having the beginners under his charge. Each was a master of the arts he taught, with Jim Pope excelling in fancy diving. Jim usually sat atop the diving tower, from where he could watch his pupils in and out of the water, while Syd

Rhodes officiated farther inshore. Theoretically the guards were highly honored by their appointments, since only those who had passed life-saving tests were chosen, but since they missed the half-hour of bathing, being allowed a mere five minutes after the others were out and before the councilors took possession of the dock, the appointment was not greatly sought after.

To-day Tod sat in his boat, watched his more fortunate companions dive and swim, listened to the merry if rather strident shouts and regretted his fate. The morning was very warm, the sun shone dazzlingly on the water and the breeze, if there was one, didn't reach the cove. At intervals he dipped an oar and corrected his position. At intervals he warned back too ambitious swimmers who had not passed their quarter-mile test, receiving as often as not words of contumely or a spraying of water in return. On a less enervating day he would have retaliated with an oar and given as good as he received in the matter of spray, but on this occasion ambition and energy were at a low ebb. Farther out experienced swimmers were disporting themselves. Several had made or were making the trip to The Knob; the distance there and back approximated four hundred yards. Nearer the head of the cove Ted Connover leaned listlessly on his oars, apparently no more thrilled with his authority than

Tod. The swimming period was about half over, and Tod was watching, with faint amusement, Joe Graves' effort to do a jack-knife dive when he heard his name called from farther out in the cove. He turned his head unhurriedly and looked. It took him a moment, against the glare of the sunlight on the water, to locate the voice, and meanwhile it came again:

"Hale! Over here, please, will you?"

Some fifty yards away, toward The Knob, some one was doing a good deal of threshing about, but Tod couldn't make out who it was. Nor did he greatly care. Although there was a strict rule against making false appeals for help, the fellows often sought to get a rise out of the guards by feigning trouble, and Tod concluded that some humorous youth was seeking to fool him. Nevertheless his duty was to make certain, and he dipped his oars leisurely and propelled the skiff toward the humorist. The latter was evidently keeping up the farce, for Tod heard his name once more and, in tones that were at once apologetic and panicky, the words: "Afraid I can't . . . make it!"

Tod spurted then. Perhaps the fellow wasn't fooling, after all. He sounded as though really alarmed. And just then Jim Pope's voice reached him. "Right oar, Hale! Make it snappy, boy!" Well, if he was being made a

goat of, so, too, was the councilor, Tod reflected as he drove the skiff ahead, and Jim wouldn't take kindly to that! He turned to make sure of his direction and received a distinct and decidedly unpleasant shock.

He was about to rescue The Pill!

"I'm awf'ly sorry," gasped Pillsbury as Tod shipped the oars and grasped him under an armpit. "Awf'ly sorry to—bother you."

"Shut up and get hold here," snapped Tod, putting his weight on the gunwale and reaching for a leg. "That's it! Heave!" Pillsbury slid over, the skiff righted. Disgustedly, Tod sought to raise the other to a sitting position, but Pillsbury resisted.

"I'm all right now," he said faintly. "Just let me be a minute, please."

"Cramp?" asked Tod gruffly.

"I dunno. Pain in my stomach. Couldn't do a thing." Pillsbury, his head pillowed on an arm, shivered as he replied with an effort, his voice muffled and faint. A canoe bumped the skiff, and the water around was suddenly filled with curious swimmers. Jim Pope bent anxiously from the wobbling craft alongside and Tod reflected that he and Vic Jordan must have made the distance from the landing in record time!

"How is he?" the councilor demanded anxiously. "Swallow much water?"

"Don't believe so," answered Tod, back in his

seat. "Says he had a bellyache." His tone may have sounded unnecessarily contemptuous to Mr. Pope, for the latter shot a slightly surprised and certainly disapproving glance at the rescuer.

"Abdominal cramps," said the councilor correctingly. "Row ashore, Hale. All right now, Pillsbury?"

"Yes, sir, only—only I'm afraid—"

"What?"

"I'm going to be sick!"

"Go ahead," laughed Jim. "It'll do you good, my boy. All right, fellows. Get out of the way."

Tod rowed to the landing as fast as he could. Pillsbury well, he told himself, was bad enough, but Pillsbury ill—

Perhaps it was concern for Tod's feelings that enabled The Pill to delay the manifestations of his sickness until he had been helped from the boat and led away.

The sensation was speedily over. The Pill went off toward his tent, the swimmers went back to the water and Tod returned to his post of duty. Ted Connover, edging his boat nearer, discussed the incident for a few minutes. "Good thing you got to him," said Ted, shaking his head seriously. "He's a mighty good pitcher, that guy."

"Yes," answered Tod quite as gravely, "good thing I thought of that, Connover. Just at first, you know, I was going to let him drown."

Ted chuckled and paddled back to where he belonged.

Later, having had his brief and invigorating five minutes in the water, Tod overtook Stuart on his way across to the tent. Stuart was preternaturally grave, but Tod, busy with his thoughts, failed to observe the fact. Presently Tod voiced the doubt which had been assailing him for some time.

"Stu," he asked hesitantly, "do you think that fellow was really drowning?"

"Really drowning?" echoed Stuart in puzzlement.

"Well, I mean was he just pretending or—"

"Pretending! I'll say he wasn't pretending! Gosh, he was as sick as—as anything, Tod. What put that idea in your head? What would he want to pretend for, you silly ass?"

"Well," said Tod lamely, "I thought perhaps—you remember that letter he wrote—"

"Well, of all the colossal vanity!" marveled Stuart. "You mean you thought he was putting it on to—to make your acquaintance? Tod, you're a wonder!"

"I didn't say I thought that," muttered the other. "It—it just occurred to me a while back that maybe—*maybe,* I say—"

"Bulltoads! Hang it, son, you've got a—a complex about The Pill. You're getting dippy!

Forget it! The fellow was sick, I tell you, and the last thing he had on his mind was you."

"All right. Don't lose your feathers. I just asked, that's all. Besides," added Tod doggedly, "a guy who'd write a letter like that might easily pull some other silly stunt, mightn't he?"

"That letter—"

"What about it?" urged Tod as Stuart ended as sharply as he had begun.

"Nothing. Forget it." Then Stuart began to chuckle. "Anyhow, Tod, no matter what The Pill meant to do he certainly broke the ice, didn't he? You can't very well help noticing a fellow whose life you've saved!"

"Oh, cut it out," growled Tod. "I didn't save his life. Anyway, I don't have to remember it!"

Tod noted that The Pill was not at dinner; nor did he show up for practice. The latter fact was accepted by Tod with a sense of relief. Sooner or later he would be required by common decency to say something polite to Pillsbury, but he was quite satisfied that it should be later. The sultriness of the morning fulfilled its promise about four o'clock, and baseball practice, slow and half-hearted from the first, was terminated by a rip-roaring thunder storm that sent the fellows hurrying to cover. Since the recreation hall offered a nearer haven, most of the players went there, arriving in a somewhat moist condition. While

it lasted, that combination of rain, thunder and lightning—there was even a dash of hail thrown in for full measure—was enthusiastic and spectacular—and a bit awe-inspiring. Mount Graystone seemed to be the butt of the lightning's pranks, and the storm hovered over its scarred head for an unconscionable time. With every crash of thunder the big building in which the majority of the campers had gathered shook perceptibly, and this fact, coupled with the blinding flashes of lightning, was too much for the equanimity of more than one of the younger boys. Doctor Templer and three others of the councilors were on hand, however, and with their aid not even Danny Grove, the camp "baby," disgraced himself.

The storm passed as quickly as it had arrived, the sun broke forth again and along the tent streets marooned youths appeared. Tod and Stuart went down to Number 6 to see how things had fared there and to remove their baseball togs. They found Tommy Greene in sole possession and looking a trifle upset. He had, though, put the storm shutters up on the weather sides and the interior of the tent showed no ill-effects. "Gosh, fellows, where were you?" exclaimed Tommy. "I was lying down and must have fallen asleep, and, gosh, the first thing I knew—gosh, what a racket! Did you ever see such lightning? Gosh!"

"Tommy," observed Stuart as he tugged at the lacings of his damp shoes, "has been reduced to a state of gosh. Where were the other Sixers, Tommy?"

"Gosh, I don't know where they went. At least, Punk said he was going to walk with a fellow named Perkins, and I guess Joe was playing tennis. But they didn't either of them come back, and it was sort of spooky being here all by myself. Of course a fellow isn't exactly scared, but—but—"

"Gosh," offered Stuart helpfully.

"But you sort of wonder what would happen if a streak of lightning happened to—to come in the door!"

"Shucks, Tommy, you had the door closed," said Tod.

"Yeah, but maybe the lightning wouldn't know it!"

They put on bathing suits and went down to sit on the dock and wait for the councilor to arrive. But the boat detail enlisted their sympathies and they helped to bail out the dozen or more skiffs. Since the afternoon sun was quite ardent, they got pretty well heated up and that bath felt good. Afterwards they had to run hard to get to the flag-pole before Ty's bugle was through calling colors. The Pill turned out for the evening meal, and Tod carefully avoided glancing in his direction after discovering that he was present. No

one had attempted to make anything heroic of Tod's rescue, and he was thankful for that. In the first place it hadn't been heroic, and in the second place Tod realized uneasily that he had come horribly close to letting Pillsbury's appeal go unheeded. In which case—well, he didn't care to think about that!

He and Stuart and Punk were sitting—rather compactly—on the steps of Number 6 just before eight that evening when a thin, unmistakable figure appeared out of the gloaming. There was a subdued snort of delight from Stuart and then a voice said: "I'm looking for Hale. Is he there?"

Tod jumped to his feet as though shot. "Yes, I— This is Hale!" he answered quickly, and, his one thought to head the visitor off, fairly sprang to meet him. "Oh, it's Pillsbury," he went on desperately. "Yes. Well, how are you? I mean to say, you're all right, eh?"

"I'm fine," replied The Pill a bit uncertainly. Having set forth for a visit to Tent Number 6, he couldn't quite understand why Tod was trying to herd him down the street. "I came over to thank you—"

"Sure! Of course! No, I don't mean that. I mean—I say, we might walk on down, eh? It's almost time for camp-fire, anyway. That was quite a storm, wasn't it?"

After a moment's hesitation The Pill turned

and accommodated his long legs to Tod's rapid strides. Possibly he wondered what the hurry was, but, having, it appeared, rather a one-track mind, he pursued his original subject. "I came over to thank you for what you did this morning," he went on very seriously. "I—"

"Oh, that wasn't anything!" Tod protested. Having left Number 6 well in the rear, certain that they were out of Stuart's hearing, he slowed his pace. Also, he got command of his voice again and stopped his panicky babbling. "Very glad I could help, of course, Pillsbury," he added in a tone that he tried to make convey to his hearer the idea that the subject was exhausted and the interview over. But The Pill missed the hint.

"I didn't feel very good after breakfast," he continued. "I guess I must have et something wasn't just right. Seemed like my stomach was upset. I guess I oughtn't to have gone into the water, maybe, but I didn't notice anything at first. Not till I was coming back from The Knob. Then, gee, Hale, it sure took hold good! I guess you didn't hear me the first time I yelled. Or maybe I didn't yell loud enough. You see, it seemed kind of silly to think of drowning just because I'd got a pain in my stomach. But it kind of scares you when you can't swim. Was you ever like that?"

"Never," replied Tod truthfully and briefly.

"Well, it kind of frightens you." Pillsbury ceased and the two ambled on in silence for a moment. Ahead of him, Tod could see the two boys of the camp-fire detail awaiting the signal of the bugle. He wondered if he was to be favored with The Pill's society for the rest of the evening. From the direction of South Street voices reached him, promising the speedy arrival of the speakers. Tod decided on drastic means. Because he had happened to pull The Pill out of the water at a critical moment it didn't follow that he was obliged to make a chum of him! Nevertheless he found it more difficult to say what he wanted to than he had imagined, and his tone was not nearly so chilly as he meant it to be.

"Look here, Pillsbury," he said. "While we're at it—that is, now that there's an opportunity—" he faltered, conscious that he was talking in Tudor Nason's manner and that if he persisted he'd find himself floundering about at the ragged end of an uncompleted sentence, just as he usually did when he tried to emulate that youth. He began again, more bluntly. "I wish you'd cut out the letters, Pillsbury," he managed, scowling ahead at the path.

"What letters?" asked his companion.

"Well, call it a note if you like," answered Tod impatiently. "It—it's too blamed silly!"

"Say, you've got me," announced The Pill. "I wish I knew what you're talking about, Hale."

"I'm talking about that note you wrote me," began Tod. Then the other's apparent sincerity struck him and he stopped, assailed by a sudden doubt. "You don't deny it, do you?" he asked uneasily.

The Pill had paused, and when Tod turned his homely countenance, mercifully blurred by the darkness, showed only blank puzzlement. "Why, gee, Hale, I never wrote you any note!" he answered simply but convincingly. "I—why, I wouldn't!"

"You didn't write me that—that—"

The Pill waited patiently but curiously.

"You mean that—" Tod's voice died away. He didn't need the other's denial again. He understood the whole thing perfectly. Great Scott, what a dumb-bell he had been to let Stu and Nason get away with a thing like that!

"What did it say, that note?" asked The Pill.

"Eh?" Tod's thoughts came back at a bound. "Oh, nothing. I mean, I was mistaken, Pillsbury. I—I'll see you again!"

And then he was gone, pounding back up the path on flying feet, leaving Pillsbury to shake his head and mutter bewilderedly in the purple darkness.

CHAPTER VIII

TOD PLANS REVENGE

But Tod didn't go far. He slowed and finally stopped, and then, staring into the gloom, he spent a minute in thought. Once a slightly reluctant smile came to his face, but, although there was none to see it, the smile was speedily replaced by an expression of stern determination. His lips moved and, had you been very, very close, you might have heard that whispered vow:

"I'll get even with them, if it takes all summer!"

He was still standing there when Stuart and Punk and Joe approached. "That you, Tod?" Punk hailed. Tod acknowledged it, and Stuart asked humorously: "What did you do with your friend, old man?"

"He's gone on," replied Tod soberly.

"*What?*" Stuart's voice was filled with horror as he asked hoarsely: "You've killed him?"

"Shut up," said Tod.

"He was concealing the body in the bushes

when we came," announced Joe, cheerfully. "I hope you did it painlessly, Tod."

Tod remained rather silent for a while, but Stuart had no suspicion that his secret was out and that his chum was plotting vengeance. In his customary talk that evening Doctor Templer referred to the morning's incident, warning the fellows against entering the water when conscious of any physical disturbances and commending Tod for his prompt and efficient response to the demands of duty. Joe Graves tried to start the applause, but since Tod was close beside him he quickly relapsed into a silence broken only by muttered concern for his ankle.

That night Tod didn't follow his usual custom of falling to sleep almost the instant his head touched his pillow. Instead he lay awake long after the camp was in silence and darkness, racking his brain for some method by which he might wreak vengeance on Stuart and Tudor. To think up a satisfactory retaliation against either of them separately would, he was sure, not be difficult, but the occasion demanded that he secure revenge against Stuart and Tudor simultaneously, and a hoax which would involve them both at the same time was not so easy to conceive. Yet the first glimmer of an idea did occur to him eventually, and he might have worked it out into complete and practical shape if Nature hadn't

refused to be put off any longer. He fell asleep with the manner of his revenge still undetermined.

There was a second ball game the next afternoon and Graystone crossed the lake in the launch and several boats and canoes to Camp Nonassett, directly eastward. Since there was none too much time at their disposal, the boats were trailed in tandem at the stern of the launch and the canoes trailed the boats. Nonassett was halfway up a hill, well back from the shore of the lake, and to reach it the flotilla docked at the little village of East Harbor and the fellows trailed across meadows and through woods for a mile, arriving at their destination very warm and a bit weary. However, the six-inning contest was all Graystone's from the second pitched ball, and the visitors returned home with a 14 to 3 victory. Littleton and The Pill each pitched three innings. Going back the boats and canoes proceeded under their own power, and, since the voyagers were not required to be back in camp until supper time, some made their way very leisurely.

Tod and Stuart, with Tudor for passenger, paddled and talked. Tod hadn't been in the game, and he was inclined to be a trifle disgruntled in consequence. Stuart said soothingly from the stern of the slowly-moving canoe: "I dare say Ty

was saving you to pinch-hit, Tod; only he didn't need you."

"Huh! That's likely, isn't it? Still, maybe I could have hit that Nonassett pitcher; every one else did! I guess, though, that Ty's about ready to let me go. When he does, I'm going in for the Tennis Team. You'd better, too, Tudor."

"I don't believe so. I understand we've got a match with Elbow Bay scheduled for around the first of the month, Tod. I fancy I'd be rather futile against those chaps."

"Why would you?" demanded Stuart. "You haven't a very difficult serve, of course, but you're a whiz at placing your returns, and if you entered for the doubles and paired up with a partner who had a good serve—look here, why don't you try to get Syd to let you and Tod enter for doubles? Tod's service isn't so rotten, and you play all right every other way. I'd like to get into that myself, but I guess Ty means to keep me on the nine."

"Of course he does," agreed Tod. "You're hitting nicely and if you ever get a chance to catch a ball I dare say you'll do it. That's a good stunt, though. Better think it over, Tudor."

"All right. I dare say I'd manage to get along fairly well if I had a good player to retrieve my errors."

"Bulltoads!" said Stuart. "I'd like to be able to skim the net the way you do! Say, Tod, let's paddle her down the lake a bit and have a look at that queer island."

"Bellinger's? Think there's time? Yes, I guess there is. All right. Maybe we'll see the old chap himself."

They were off the upper end of Eagle Island then, and to reach Bellinger's, a mile westward of Eagle, they would have to go well out of their course. They were already almost the last of the craft, but as Tod let the canoe's nose swing farther southward the occupants of a rowboat hailed them questioningly. Stuart waved his paddle. "Tell 'em not to wait supper for us!" he shouted back. It was pleasant on the water this afternoon, for the sun was setting behind clouds and there was no dazzling glare to offend the eyes. Eagle, which was quite a large island near the eastern shore of the lake, was privately owned, and since the buildings and dock were at the southern end of it it had the appearance of being quite as uninhabited as its distant neighbor, Bellinger's, until the red canoe had passed well beyond it. Then the boys saw a small sail-boat riding at her moorings at the far end of it.

"Who lives on Eagle?" asked Stuart. Neither of the others could tell him, but Tod hazarded the opinion that, whoever he was, he must have a

"bunch of money." "Remember the whopping big speed-boat we saw at the dock there the day we came up?" he asked. But Stuart's memory failed him. "It's a corking island, though, isn't it?" he asked, viewing the wooded shore as they angled away from it. "I wouldn't mind living there, but, gosh, that other place gives me the creeps!"

Just where the difference lay between the two it would have been hard to say, yet Eagle looked pleasant and cheerful and Bellinger's, toward the northern shore of which they were making leisurely progress, was unmistakably dismal. Perhaps the fact that the first named had been carefully tended and the latter had not supplied the explanation. On Eagle the shore line was divested of underbrush and rank growth and here and there a cobbled beach lay between trees and water. The forest was less like a forest than a park, and one could see well beyond the outer fringe of trees. On Bellinger's everything was a tangle. Bushes clung to the edge of the shore and dipped their branches in the water. Grass and sedge grew in the shallows. Beyond, so impenetrable was the growth that only occasionally could the vision reach past the outer wall of trees and underbrush. A veritable welter of dead branches would have deterred the most determined trespasser. As the canoe drew closer

the neglected aspect of the small island became more apparent, and Tudor said: "It's a shame to let a place run down like that, fellows. Wouldn't you think that they'd at least clear up along the shore?"

"You wouldn't," answered Tod, "if you'd seen the queer who lives here."

"Where's the house?" asked Tudor.

"Somewhere out of sight. You can't see it from the landing. Maybe there isn't any. Maybe the old guy lives in a tent. Hold her off, Stu. No use going any nearer.

"Afraid something will jump out and grab you?" asked Stuart with a chuckle.

"Well, by gosh," Tod answered honestly, "I wouldn't go ashore there after dark for a hundred dollars! I call the blamed thing perfectly ghastly!"

"It is a bit gruesome," agreed Tudor, and Tod wondered why he couldn't have thought of such a perfectly appropriate word. "Still, as voices carry surprisingly over the water, perhaps we'd better keep our opinions to ourselves. If Mr. Bellinger heard us speaking so disparagingly of his island he might not like it."

"Yes," muttered Tod, "and he looks like a man who might get a kick mooning around through those woods, too. I wouldn't be surprised to see his queer white face peering out at us any mo-

ment. Gosh, though, if I did see it I guess I'd jump overboard and strike out for home!"

"Speaking of home," remarked Stuart suggestively.

"I'll say so!" Tod spoke with positive enthusiasm. "It's almost half-past now. Let's beat it, Stu."

Stuart dug his paddle willingly enough and the canoe turned its stern to the dismal island. Tudor looked back as they left it behind. "Funny," he said reflectively, "how sort of depressed that place makes you feel. Perhaps if you chaps hadn't given me an earful beforehand I wouldn't have thought anything about it, but just now I agree with Tod; a hundred would be about nine hundred dollars too little to get me to venture there in the dark. I'll bet it's full of owls, too. Ever heard a screech-owl go off suddenly pretty nearly over your head, Tod? I have once. It scared me almost to death."

"I haven't heard any owls around here," answered Tod comfortingly.

"A bit early for them, I think. I guess you'll hear them later in the season. I heard a loon the other night. A loon's another sweet singer."

"What does a loon sound like?" asked Stuart.

"Sounds as if he'd gone crazy and thought it was awfully funny. You've heard the saying 'As crazy as a loon' haven't you? You take a couple

of loons a half-mile or so apart and let them begin telling funny stories to each other and it's positively weird. We used to go to a lake up in Northern Maine when I was about eight or nine, and the place was fairly cluttered with them. I used to put my head under the covers when they started to chirp!"

"Maybe," said Tod, "Mr. Bellinger has a couple of pet loons on his island. Are they good eating, Tudor? How are the eggs?"

"Probably better scrambled than any other way," laughed Tudor. "I never heard of any one eating a loon, Tod, although folks do get away with coot stew, I believe, and a coot must be sort of first cousin to a loon. How would you like to go for a loon hunt some day and then sample the—the trophy of the chase?"

"You wouldn't have to go far to catch a loon," said Stuart significantly. "Say, Tod, try pushing some water with that paddle, will you? I smell supper!"

The difficulty with Tod's plan of vengeance was that it was built on the foundation of an event which could not be depended on to transpire in the ordinary course. For several mornings he watched the bulletin outside the Office, but it became more and more evident to him that Chance needed the aid of Human Agency, and so one forenoon, Stuart being engaged in the carpenter

shop on the making of a canoe paddle after ideas of his own, he went in search of Jim Pope. Jim, who was one of the older councilors, both as regarded length of service and number of years, held chief authority under Doctor Templer, and it was, or so Tod had been given to understand, Jim Pope who enacted the rôle of Fate and arranged the schedule of details each day. Tod found him at last in the mess hall listing needed supplies for the larder and waited until, the task completed, the councilor called: "Want to see me, Hale?"

Tod said he did, joined Jim, put his elbows on the table and smiled his sweetest. "What," asked Jim, smiling back, "are you trying to do? 'Vamp' me?"

Tod disclaimed any such intention. "Mr. Pope," he began tentatively, "do you suppose it will ever happen that Younge and Nason will get on camp-fire detail together?"

Jim Pope looked puzzled. "They might, but I'd say that the chance is extremely thin. You see, Hale, selections are made according to a system designed to—ah—apportion the camp tasks among the fellows with favor toward none and justice toward all, or words to that effect. Considering the number of details and the number of possibilities I'd say that the result you mention is—ah—decidedly unlikely."

"Yes, sir," sighed Tod. "I was afraid so."

"I am to gather, then, that, in your judgment, the coupling of Younge and—was it Nason?—yes, Nason—that the coupling of those young gentlemen on the camp-fire detail is a consummation devoutly to be wished?"

Tod agreed gravely. "Yes, sir, I—it would be just what you said, Mr. Pope."

The councilor picked up a glass salt-cellar and examined it. "And for why, Hale?" he inquired.

"Well—" But Tod balked there.

"Would it," continued Jim, setting down the salt-cellar as though perfectly satisfied with it, "add to the joy of nations? That is, of course, the joy of Camp Graystone?"

Tod grinned. "Yes, sir!" he answered emphatically.

"Ah! And without violating the laws, rules and precepts?"

Tod considered earnestly and then answered in the affirmative. Mr. Pope gathered his list and his fountain-pen together and observed Tod gravely. "In that case, Hale," he said, "it is just possible that the Law of Chance may be made amenable to reason. My parting advice to you is watch and wait."

"Yes, sir," replied Tod just as soberly. The two exchanged a meaningful glance and parted.

Tod went around to the kitchen entrance when

the councilor had departed and found "Pop" and Archie, the helper, seated at opposite ends of a tin wash-boiler into which, with astonishing rapidity, they dropped nude potatoes which, but a seeming instant before, had reposed fully clothed in a bushel basket. Archie grinned as Tod took up a position against the door frame, and Pop scowled portentously and growled:

"Well, son, what you want?"

Pop Miller was a formidable individual, just under six feet in height and proportionately broad of body. He had a shock of grizzled hair which stood up above his red countenance like the bristles of an elderly shoe-brush and a long and extremely black—suspiciously black, some fellows hinted—mustache which jutted far beyond the sides of his face. He also had a deep, gruff voice that, when going well, could be heard as far as the shore of the lake. He had been an Army cook for many years and had brought away with him on his discharge the martinet manners of his officers. Yet, although he made Archie stand around and liked to impress new boys with his ferocity, he was under it all a kind-hearted old chap; as mild as a May morning when it pleased him to be and good-natured enough when things were going well. He was a fine cook, and, had he been permitted, would have fed his charges not wisely but too well. He believed in food and

lots of it, and was convinced that pie, pudding and cake—to say nothing of doughnuts—were prime requisites for the growing boy. It was one of his grievances that at Camp Graystone pie was allowed only twice a week, and then in portions of a size totally inadequate to keep life in the body. You could always get a "hand-out" from Pop by appearing at the kitchen door and looking hungry. Indeed, you didn't have to even look hungry, for it was Pop's theory—not at all untenable—that every boy was always hungry. The "hand-out" was usually two doughnuts. He kept a supply of them on hand for just such emergencies. Having asked Tod his business, Pop's gaze traveled naturally toward the dish-pan on the shelf which held that store. The visitor's reply, though, was disconcerting.

"Pop," he asked, "have you got any soup?"

"Soup! Soup, eh? What's the matter with you? Ain't sick, are you? No, sir, there's no soup to-day. Roast beef to-day, with mashed potatoes and string beans and brown gravy. Got to have soup, have you?"

"I didn't mean for dinner, Pop. I meant have you got any in cans in there." Tod nodded toward the store-room at the back.

"Oh, yes, there's tomato soup in there, son, but I don't use that stuff less I have to. When I do I dope it up so's you wouldn't know it ever came

out of a tin. Was it tomato soup you wanted?"

"I guess any kind will do," answered Tod after a moment's consideration. "Say, Pop, would you sell me a can of it?"

"Sufferin' snakes, boy! Why, them cans holds a gallon! You couldn't eat a gallon of tomato soup in a week. No more could Archie, and he eats more'n any two boys I ever saw!"

Archie grinned. Tod said: "I don't want to eat it, Pop." He looked carefully around and continued in a lower voice: "You see, it's a kind of a joke, Pop. I thought that if I paid you whatever it costs, you might let me have a can of it and not say anything."

"H'm, I don't know about that, son. First place, it's some deviltry you're up to—"

"Honest, Pop, I—"

"And, second place, I ain't got authority to sell goods out of the stores. You'll have to see Mr. Pope about that, son."

Tod's disappointment was evident and Pop noted it. "Hi, you," he bawled to Archie, "get a move on and don't sit there gawking! This is a gentlemen's conversation, and nothing to do with you!" Then he turned again to Tod. "When was you wanting this soup?" he demanded fearsomely.

"Why, I guess I'd ought to have it to-day, or—well, to-morrow would do."

"So? Got a half-dollar on you? Put it on the shelf there. Now beat it. Hold on, want a doughnut? Archie, pass him a couple. Wipe your hands first, you benighted heathen!"

"Thanks," said Tod, accepting the favor. "But—but about the soup—"

"I told you I couldn't sell it to you, didn't I?" Pop's frown was terrifying. "If you was to come by here this afternoon, say, about three o'clock, when I'm off, and was to see a can just around the door here, under this table, see, and was to take it—well, that would be your look-out. What you gogglin' at, Archie?"

"I wasn't," replied Archie, still grinning.

"Well, don't you! Get on with them spuds!"

"Thank you, Pop," said Tod, gratefully. "And you won't say anything to any of the others, will you? Nor Archie, either."

"How can I say anything when I don't know nothing?" asked Pop reasonably enough. "And as for him—" He shot a threatening look at the helper— "he better not open his trap if he don't want to be scalped with a cleaver!"

Archie continued to grin.

CHAPTER IX

SHORE DETAIL

EVIDENTLY the Law of Chance wasn't readily amenable to the voice of reason, for Tod derived only disappointment from a perusal of the list of details on three occasions following that conversation with Mr. Pope. However, if he failed to find Stuart and Tudor down for camp-fire duties, he found something even more startling on the third morning. He read the words twice before he acknowledged the first reading to have been correct.

"Shore—Pillsbury and Hale."

Tod stared disgustedly at the line on the typewritten Orders. If it had been Camp Police or Lamps it would have been bad enough, but Shore—Boats, in unofficial parlance—was far, far worse. It meant that he and The Pill would be on duty at the boat house half the forenoon and most of the afternoon, and just how he was to endure the other's society for so long he didn't know. What the dickens would he talk about? Of course he could take a book down there, but a fellow couldn't read all the time! He wondered

if he could develop a plausible illness on such short notice, and decided that he couldn't; he had seen it tried. He wondered what Stuart and Tudor would say when they saw the list!

Since Pillsbury had come to the tent that evening to thank him for pulling him out of the water Tod had spoken a bare dozen words to him. Much to his surprise, The Pill had not, as Stuart had predicted he would do, used that incident as the basis for closer intimacy. His continued interest in Tod was indicated by the fact that he still stared at him across the dining hall, still unobtrusively sought proximity—or seemed to. But he hadn't spoken to him save to say "Hello" or, on one occasion, deliver a message from Coach Tyson on the ball field. As for the proximity part of it, Tod was now saved from that, for Mr. Tyson had delicately conveyed to Tod the conviction that the Nine could get on without his services. Since Tod had not, from the first, deluded himself about his baseball ability he was neither surprised nor disappointed. In fact, when he realized that he would no longer have to concern himself with the possibility of having to fraternize with The Pill, he felt distinctly relieved. But now—this! "Shore—Pillsbury and Hale!" Oh, thunder!

The Pill looked, to use Tod's own expression, less appetizing than ever that morning. Tod

found him sauntering down the hill at nine, loose-jointed, angular, thin, and, after a moment of hesitation, overtook him and asked: "You had Shore Detail before, Pillsbury?"

The other looked up and shook his head. He seemed embarrassed, a fact which Tod observed with satisfaction. It would be just so much easier to prevent unpleasant familiarity. "Neither have I," continued Tod. "By the way, what about the key?" Then he saw that The Pill wore it tucked into his belt. "Oh, that's all right then," he added. "I clean forgot it." He needn't have confessed to the lapse of memory, though, he reflected a moment later. "Do you know just what it is we have to do, Pillsbury?"

"Guess so," said The Pill. "Clean up, bail out the boats, put out the canoes and see that the right fellows get them."

"Oh, but oughtn't we to have the list?"

"I've got it." The Pill patted a hip pocket. Tod frowned. Hang it, he had forgotten everything, while The Pill—"My name was first," went on the other apologetically, "and so I was supposed to get it. Maybe you'd better have it, though, and attend to that business."

But Tod declined the proffered document a bit stiffly. "No, thanks," he answered. "You keep it." It was, he reflected, as The Pill unlocked the boat-house door, going to be a bit difficult to main-

tain an attitude of superiority with the other in possession of what might be termed the badges of office and exhibiting an executive ability quite unsuspected.

"Don't you bother about this part of it," said The Pill, finding the broom as if by instinct in a corner and beginning to sweep in a most knowing way.

"Well," said Tod indecisively. He watched a bit helplessly for a moment and then went out on the float and looked over the moored boats. Only three of the number called for bailing, and he took off shoes and stockings and went to work on them. By the time he had finished the first The Pill was through inside and he came out and viewed Tod's endeavors disapprovingly.

"Better let me do that," he said. "You'll get all messed up."

Tod paused and looked up at him with a scowl. "Say, how do you get that way? What's the idea of wanting all the jobs yourself? Hang it, Pillsbury, I'm not—not a cripple!"

"All right," murmured The Pill, flushing under his freckles. "I only thought—"

"Oh, well," said Tod, relenting, "there's another bailer inside, I think. You get at that one over there. The rest are all right, I guess."

Finally they lifted the canoes from the racks and laid them on the float to the number of six.

"That's about as many as they'll want this morning, I guess," said Tod. "Better stick your list up just inside the door, Pillsbury, where we can both see it if business gets brisk."

But there was seldom any great rush for boats in the morning. A good many of the fellows were being coached in one study or another, while, among the younger boys especially, the classes in carpentry and basketry and forestry were popular. There were, too, a goodly number of youths devoted to photography and to whom the darkroom offered more enjoyment than did the outdoors. However, six ardent fishermen accounted for three boats and a canoe, and as the morning wore on as many more craft were taken out. Tod hadn't brought a book with him, and between the demands for boats he wandered around or sat with his legs hanging over the edge of the swimming dock. The Pill didn't venture to disturb him, a fact which surprised Tod and ought to have pleased him. But watching the distant fishermen, speculating about Bellinger's Island, staring into the water for a glimpse of a bass or a pickerel began to pall and by half-past ten even the society of The Pill seemed preferable to none. He reflected that Stuart or Tudor could have come down and kept him company for a while without hurting themselves much, forgetting that earlier in the day he had hoped they would stay

away. Now, being "razzed" struck him as better than being bored!

He got up and strolled casually over to the float and around the shining maroon lengths of the upturned canoes. The interior of the boat house looked enticingly shadowy and cool in contrast to the sun-smitten world outside. Pillsbury was seated by the big doorway on an improvised bench of two boxes and a short length of board. Tod glanced at him briefly. "Hot outside," he announced in explanation of his entrance. The Pill only nodded, his gaze following Tod as the latter lounged aimlessly about. But there wasn't much to see inside; the councilors' bathing-suits hanging from a line; the paddles and oars stacked overhead; the bench with its few tools and dried-out paint brushes, shavings, old nails, bits of canvas, old pots and cans and bottles; the rest of the canoes on their racks; a moth-eaten Pennsylvania banner above the rear entrance; a block and tackle suspended over a beam; the list beside the doorway of those fellows eligible for boats and for canoes. The list led him back to Pillsbury's vicinity, and when he had spent as much time on it as he could contrive to he leaned against the door-frame and looked out over the very blue expanse of glinting water.

"Sit on this," said The Pill, jumping up so quickly that the board fell to the floor and one

box toppled. Tod shook his head, yet when the other had restored the seat he accepted half of it. The board was long enough to permit of a considerable interval between him and The Pill.

"I hope this is the last time I'll get stung for this job," he said.

"I don't mind it," was the answer, half apologetic. "It's better than Police."

"Can't see it," Tod said. "Police detail at least gives you something to do." The Pill made no response. Tod glanced at him from the corners of his eyes. Proximity added no glamor to Armitage Pillsbury, yet Tod discovered that, after all, there wasn't anything really offensive in his looks; not when you came right down to it. His skin was all right save for the numberless rusty-red freckles, and, of course, not even The Pill could help having features that somehow looked as if they didn't belong together. The demand for speech of some sort produced a question from Tod. "Say, Pillsbury, where'd you learn to pitch a ball like you do?" he asked.

"Home in Pennsylvania. Tappen. Ever been there?" Tod shook his head. "Thought you might have. It's a pretty big town. You go through it on your way to Pittsburg from New York. I started playing baseball when I wasn't any bigger than that." Pillsbury held a hand about three feet from the floor. "You know, just

back-yard ball, only there weren't many back-yards at home."

"But who showed you how to curve a ball?"

"No one, I guess. I just picked it up. I used to see the older fellows do it, and of course I knew that if they could do it I could, and so I sort of studied it out. We had a pretty good nine at school this spring. Beat about every team we played."

"What is Tappen," asked Tod, "a coal town?"

"Yes. That's about all there is there. I guess you'd think it wasn't much of a place," he added reflectively. "Sort of a rough town, on the side of the mountain, with things pretty well messed up with shafts and breakers and railroads and so on. We've got a mighty good school, though; and the Town Hall's kind of handsome; it's got white pillars in front of it, like the places you see in the movies."

"Your folks in the coal business?"

"Well, my dad is. Mother's been dead a long time. Then I've got a married sister, and her husband's in it too. We've been sort of poor folks until lately. Ma never had much when she was living, I guess. Dad used to work in one of the mines then. About four years ago he got to be superintendent, and then he and another man bought a mine that was sort of worked out, or so folks said, and found a new vein. He's done

mighty well since then. We bought us a house and got to be real stylish. For Tappen," he added with a shy grin. "Guess you wouldn't think much of it, maybe. It's pretty nice, though. I've got a room of my own now. I sure like that!"

After a moment's silence Tod asked: "Having a good time here, Pillsbury?"

"Fine! It's a great place, isn't it? Of course I don't know many of the fellows here, but every one's mighty nice to me, and the councilors are a swell bunch. Mr. Tyson's a wonder, ain't—isn't he? And Mr. Rhodes, too. I guess they're all fine."

"Yes, I guess they are," replied Tod thoughtfully. "How about the gang in your tent?"

"Great," answered The Pill enthusiastically. "Do you know Melders, the fellow they call 'Mush'? He's a corker. And then Pinckney's in our tent, the fellow who plays first base, you know. And Joe Brewster and your friend, Nason. They're nice, too. I like Nason a lot. He's—he's not so easy to get acquainted with, but I guess if I knew him I'd think a lot of him."

"He's all right," murmured Tod. "You've got to know him, as you say. Well, I'm glad you like it here. I think it's a pretty good camp."

Presently The Pill said, "I'm sorry you quit playing baseball, Hale."

"I didn't quit, Pillsbury." Tod chuckled. "I just never began. I don't know much about that game. I like it well enough, but I guess I'd never make a player. Stu Younge's pretty good at it. He plays on our school team and did mighty well last spring."

"You and he go to school together? Where at's it?"

"What?"

"Where do you go to school?"

"Oh, Nostrand. Ever hear of it?"

Pillsbury shook his head. "But that doesn't mean anything. I don't know much about schools, or camps either. This is the first camp I ever was to—at. Gee, you ought to have seen Dad when I told him I wanted to come here! He don't know yet what a summer camp's like. All the camps he knows about are mining camps. He thinks I'm living in a tent and cooking my own grub over a fire. I'd like to get some pictures of this place and send them to him."

"Why, don't you send him one of the Camp booklets? There are lots of pictures in that."

"Could I get one?" asked The Pill eagerly. "I haven't ever seen one of those."

"You haven't! How did you happen to come here then? Didn't they send you a gray-and-red pamphlet thing with pictures and terms and—and information?"

"No." The Pill shook his head. "I saw an ad in a magazine one day, and I hadn't ever been up around here, and I asked Dad if I could go and he said I could and I wrote to Doctor Templer and told him I was coming. Would he give me one of the books if I asked him?"

"Sure, but—you don't have to. I've got one you can have. I'll bring it to you this afternoon. Say, what time is it? Those boats had better be getting in!" As if in answer to the statement a boat bumped the float and a voice called to them.

"Hi, you guys! Come and look at the whale of a pickerel I got!"

CHAPTER X

FOX TAKES A PLUNGE

"What are you looking for?" asked Stuart, observing Tod's activities from his bunk.

"That camp prospectus thing I had in my bag. I don't see what the dickens I did with it."

"What of it? If there's any little thing you want to know about the camp ask me. Dinner's at twelve-thirty, supper's—"

"Shut up! Say, haven't you got one of them?"

"Yes; want it? What's the idea?"

"I told Pillsbury I'd give him mine, but yours will do just as well. The poor fish never saw one, and his father thinks he's living in a tent and eating canned beans and—and roughing it generally. He wants to send it home."

"My dear fellow!" Stuart leaped from the bunk. "If it's for your friend The Pill you're more than welcome. It does my heart good to see you two chaps getting together so nicely. I was saying to Tudor just this morning—"

"I'll bet you were! You and he— Gosh, this isn't very fresh looking, Stu!"

"What of that, son? The insides are all right.

Probably The Pill's old man won't believe it anyway! How'd you get on this morning?"

"All right," muttered Tod, scanning the booklet doubtfully. "He didn't bother me any. He's got more sense than I thought he had. Well, I guess this will have to do, but I must say you've smeared it up horribly. There's mess-call, thank goodness! I'm starved!"

The Shore Detail went on again at three o'clock. Tod was saved further confidences from The Pill —I'm using Tod's mental phraseology—for the reason that the afternoon was the popular period of the day with the boating and canoeing element and the time of the detail was largely taken up with the task of awarding craft to the applicants. There was a rule that prohibited the use of boat or canoe in the afternoon by less than two fellows, a rule made necessary by the preponderance of applicants over boats, and the enforcement of it required watchfulness, determination and, in cases, even courage. On the other hand, no boat might hold more than five nor a canoe more than three. Oars were limited to two pair per boat and paddles to one pair. Requests for canoes might be made the day previous, and not until those requests had been met could others be satisfied. Boys who had not proved their swimming ability were not allowed on the water, while only those who had satisfactorily performed the quar-

ter-mile test were permitted to take out canoes. There were plenty of restrictions to be enforced, and Tod and Pillsbury were kept busy much of the time. It was held to be a particularly clever stunt to get the better of the Shore Detail. Tod would have fallen for the innocent looks and words of young Parmenter if it hadn't been for The Pill. Parmenter was already getting his oars when The Pill intervened.

"He isn't down on the list, Hale, is he?"

"Yes, isn't he? He said he was. By gosh, he isn't! Here, you Parmenter, what's the idea? You're not down for boats."

"Aren't I really, Hale?" The boy read the list and turned a surprised countenance to Tod. "Well, I'm certain it's all right. You see, I just had my test a couple of days ago and I suppose Syd forgot to put my name down. That must be it!"

"Well," began Tod doubtfully.

"Better see Mr. Rhodes," interrupted The Pill. "If he says it's all right you get the boat."

Tod looked at The Pill with some surprise. The decisive tone was quite out of keeping with his conception of Pillsbury. Parmenter looked at The Pill, too, but it was far less favorably. He went off muttering. "Fresh alick," was one of the snatches that floated back.

"Think he was lying?" asked Tod.

"Yes, but, anyhow, we can't give boats to those whose names aren't down," answered Pillsbury. "And his isn't, and that lets us out."

"Gosh, but he looked so truthful!" murmured Tod.

Tudor came down and visited awhile, sitting on the edge of the float with Tod and supplying welcome diversion. All boats were out by that time and The Pill was reading a newspaper in the shade of the boat house. The afternoon swimming hour was close and a few fellows were already showing up in bathing suits. "Wish I could go in," sighed Tod.

"Go ahead," answered Tudor. "I'll take your place here. All you have to do is see that the boats are tied up and the oars returned, I take it."

Tod shook his head. "Thanks, but I'll have to stick. Why don't you go in?"

"Too lazy, I suspect. Maybe I will, though. Here's a boat now." Tod arose and walked down to the edge of the float.

"Hey, you chaps! Let her run! Want to smash that boat?" he warned. The boat, propelled by vigorous strokes, crashed against the float, producing a shout of laughter from the three occupants. Tod seized the bow and then the gunwale, pulling the craft side-to. "That's no way to use a boat," he protested mildly. "That's what starts leaks."

"You should worry," replied one of the rowers as he jumped out. "You don't have to mend 'em, Hale."

Tod had never been able to decide whether he liked Howard Fox or didn't. Now he decided that he didn't. The other two occupants stepped onto the float, but only one pair of oars came with them. "Get those other oars out, please," said Tod, busy with the painter.

"I have mine," said one of the fellows. "Those are yours, Howdy."

"Let 'em stay there," laughed Fox. "I'm through with 'em."

"Maybe," answered Tod, "but you're supposed to look after them, Fox. That's the rule."

"Aw, shut up, Hale. You make me weary. Get 'em yourself. I've had to do it often enough, and I was doing Shore Detail before you ever saw this camp. Come on, Lige."

"They'll stay right where they are then," said Tod. He moved away to oversee the landing of another craft, but Fox followed, placed a big hand on his chest and stopped him. He was grinning, but the grin wasn't a pleasant one.

"Listen, little boy," he said in a low voice. "Don't let you and I have any trouble, eh? Because you'd certainly get the worst of it. You get those oars out, see?"

Tod shook his head, pushed Fox's hand aside

and went on. But the sound of The Pill's voice halted him again. "Who had this boat?" asked Pillsbury. Some one answered and The Pill continued firmly, "You'll have to take the oars out and put them in the house."

"Who says all that?" demanded Fox truculently.

"The rules say so."

"Aw, forget it, kid. I know all about the rules. You and your side-kick here are too chesty. Listen, Funny Face. If I looked like you I'd keep my mouth shut so's not to attract notice. You're a scream, kid!"

The Pill went very red and then white, and the freckles never looked more numerous nor more disfiguring. Fox's words brought a few chuckles, but most of the dozen or so fellows within hearing saw no humor in them. Tod was one of them. He stepped quickly back along the float and confronted Fox. "That's a rotten way to talk," he declared hotly. "Pillsbury's only doing what he's required to, and you know it, Fox."

"Is that so?" snapped the other. "Who's talking to you, anyhow? Get out of here!" He pushed Tod back against one of the interested audience. Tod's cheek-bones went suddenly white and he sprang forward, but Tudor seized him.

"Don't do that, Tod," Tudor begged. "You'll get in wrong! Don't mind him!"

"Say, Fox, those oars have got to come out!" The Pill had thrust himself in front of Tod. His voice was a bit shrill. It sounded dogged, too. Fox, very angry now, laughed discordantly. He took a step forward and grabbed at Pillsbury's arms, but the latter squirmed aside. Tod, calmer, exclaimed, "Keep out of it, Pillsbury!" Fox followed The Pill, grabbed again and this time got him. But The Pill was elusive and Fox's efforts to pin his arms to his slim body failed. Fox still chuckled, as though to indicate that it was all in fun, but his face belied the chuckles. Once The Pill was almost free, but Fox seized him again, swung him quickly about and pushed him, sidewise, toward the edge of the float. Tod felt relief. If Fox meant only to give Pillsbury a bath no harm could come of it. Some of the audience were already smiling in anticipation. The Pill fought stubbornly, contesting every foot of the way, but Fox had a stout grip on him. Close to the edge Fox growled: "Maybe this'll wash some of those spots off, kid!"

And then a most surprising thing happened. Somehow The Pill's one partly free arm shot up to Fox's chin, The Pill's body squirmed, eel-like, to the boards and, over-balanced by his effort to hold his captive, Fox went forward and over and

struck the water as flat as a pancake and with a splash that might have been heard half-way up the slope!

An instant of surprise held the audience soundless, but before Fox had quite disappeared under the surface the silence was broken by the first ecstatic shout of laughter, and when Fox came into sight again, gulping and fighting for breath, the mirth was riotous. Even Fox's companions in the boat were laughing traitorously. The Pill, having regained his feet, was the only sober one in sight.

"You'd better beat it," advised Tod as Fox began to pull his dripping body onto the float. Perhaps The Pill thought so, too, but he made no answer, nor did he stir from where he stood. Fox looked pretty mean now as he stood up, and Tod moved forward. But Fox had his eyes on Pillsbury, and it was toward Pillsbury that he went, fists doubled. What would have happened next will never be known, for just then a voice from the boat-house door brought all heads around. Mr. Pope was standing there in his swimming togs. How long he had been there no one could say.

"That'll do for that, Fox," he said quietly. He walked down the float then. "Now, then, get these boats tied up, Hale. Over on the other dock, you fellows who are going in. Pillsbury!"

"Yes, Mr. Pope."

"Some one's left a pair of oars in that boat yonder."

"I'm sorry," muttered The Pill. "I'll get them, sir."

"Hold on! Who had that boat out?"

"I left those, sir," said Fox hurriedly.

"Then you'd better take them out, my boy. Boats all in yet, Pillsbury?"

"No, sir, there are three out—and four canoes."

"Whistle them in. It's four minutes to five. By the way, Fox."

"Yes, Mr. Pope?"

"You were here last summer, weren't you? I thought so. Well, it's a rule that those who use boats must return the oars to the boat house. And it's one of the duties of the Shore Detail to see that the rule is enforced. You understand that, do you?"

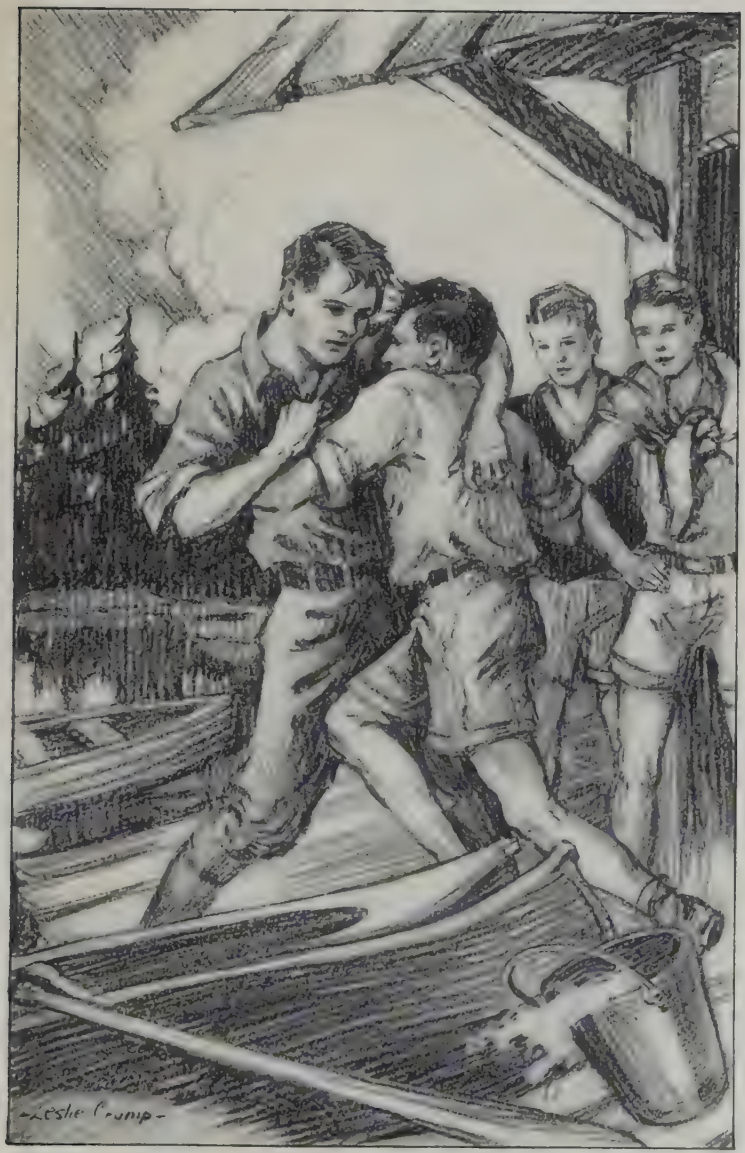
"Yes, sir."

"Good. I was afraid you didn't."

"How long," asked Tod, "do you suppose he was up there?"

Tudor shook his head, smiling. "I don't know," he said, "but evidently long enough to grasp the situation, eh?"

"I guess so. Say, I'm glad you butted in when I started for that guy!"



The Pill fought stubbornly, contesting every foot of the way

"You ought to be. He'd have smeared you, Tod."

"Maybe, though I'm not so sure about that. What I was thinking was that Jim Pope might have been there all the time, and there's a rule against scrapping. Say, you going in?"

"Too late now, isn't it?"

"No, we've got a quarter of an hour. Come on, let's! Hi, Pillsbury! Is time up?"

"Two minutes yet, but if you want to go at five I'll wait for the boats. The last one's in sight now!"

"Tell you what, Tudor, you fetch my bathing suit down and I'll change in the boat house. That'll save time!" Tudor agreed and disappeared up the slope and The Pill joined Tod. He looked thoughtful. "Glad I didn't have to fight that fellow," he mused aloud. "I—I got a mean way of losing my temper when I get to fighting. He made me sort of mad, anyway!"

Tod started to laugh, caught the sober look in the other's countenance and coughed instead. It was very evident that The Pill believed what he said. Tudor came back, dressed for swimming, and tossed Tod's bathing suit to him. "Step on it," he panted. "The tide's going out!"

CHAPTER XI

TOD BEHAVES STRANGELY

Stuart didn't get away from baseball practice in time to join them in the water, and it wasn't until after colors that he heard of the incident of Fox and the oars. Tudor narrated the tale, doing full justice to The Pill's spunk and dwelling—needlessly, Tod considered—on the entente cordiale existing between the members of the detail. "Tod was going to mix it with Fox, but I pulled him back, and then Pillsbury steps in between them. The fellow has grit, and you can't deny it, Tod."

"Who wants to deny it?" asked Tod in mild exasperation. "If it wasn't for his looks The Pill wouldn't be half bad. He told me about himself to-day, and, hang it, fellows, he never's had much of a chance to—well, to make anything of himself. His father was a coal miner and his mother died a good while ago and he's always lived in a hick town. Anyway, that's what it sounded like. He said the town hall was pretty fine because it had white pillars like a palace in

the movies. Something like that. He's plumb ignorant of a lot of things, but he's no fool, I guess. What I'm getting at is that it isn't fair to compare him with fellows like—well, with fellows who have had good homes and gone to good schools and been brought up in different surroundings."

"Fair enough," agreed Stuart. "But you sort of forget, old dear, that Tudor and I have been a heap more appreciative of The Pill's good points than you have. Unless my memory's on the blink it's you who have made fun of him."

"I never made fun of him," Tod denied vigorously. "I said I couldn't stand his looks, and I couldn't, and I can't—or, anyhow, I don't like 'em. But I never made fun of him."

"You didn't! How about when he wrote you that letter?"

"I said it was silly and that he was crazy, but —oh, shut up!" Stuart was grinning like a catfish, if we accept Tod's simile. He and Tudor still referred at intervals to that letter and Tod let them have their fun, biding his time. So far he had resisted the temptation to charge them with the hoax, although there had been times when he had been strongly moved to. Revenge would be far more satisfying if it struck from a clear sky.

"What about Howdy Fox?" asked Stuart pres-

ently. "Think he will hold a grudge against you? Or against The Pill?"

Tod shrugged. "I should worry about Fox. As for Pillsbury—gosh, I don't know, but I have an idea that he can look after himself!"

"Probably can," commented Tudor. "Any fellow brought up in a Pennsylvania mining town is bound to learn a few things, I guess. But that Fox fellow strikes me as being a good deal of a bluff. He was certainly mild enough when Jim Pope called him down."

The next morning Tod read the list at the Office with more pleasure. In fact, he had difficulty in resisting a chortle of joy, but, since Stuart was at his elbow, he did resist it. Stuart displayed emotion. "How does he gee that way?" he asked plaintively. "He's got Tudor and me down for camp-fire and I was doing lanterns not four days ago! How often do I have to have detail? I'm going to make a kick, Tod!"

"Go to it," chuckled his chum. "You've got a fat chance!"

"But, hang it—"

"Well, look what might have happened, son. You might have drawn boats, and not been able to play ball. Shucks, camp-fire's a cinch."

"How do you know? You've never had it yet."

"I've never had a million dollars, but I know it doesn't hurt! Snap out of it, Stu, and look

pleasant. Besides, you've got Tudor for a companion in misery. You might have had—well, The Pill!"

After inspection Tod strolled nonchalantly back toward the mess hall. But he didn't pause there. Beyond the row of buildings paths ascended the hill in various directions. One led to a junction with the trail that started at the county road three miles north and ascended Mount Graystone, and this path Tod selected. But he didn't go far on it. For a way it ran through waist-high bracken and sweet-fern, and then taller bushes hedged it in and before long it was winding at an easy grade through a thick forest of pine and maple and birch. Presently, having reached the woods, Tod glanced cautiously ahead and behind, left the path and squirmed under the lower branches of a hemlock. When he reappeared he bore a parcel roughly wrapped in a newspaper.

With his burden he retraced his steps almost to the clearing. Just before the kitchen wing of the mess hall came into view, he turned left on another trail, walking circumspectly, keeping a sharp watch. Progress wasn't so easy now, for the present path was less used and he had to guard his face from the branches that disputed his way and beware of roots and trailers that sought to trip him. Eventually the trail led him from the thicket close to the third base side of

the ball field. That was as far as he dared go, for there was a game of scrub going on. Selecting a spot just off the path, he set his burden down behind a bush and covered it as best he could with dead leaves and mold. He wasn't altogether satisfied with the camouflage, for any one seeking a paper-wrapped bundle would spy it readily enough. But as no one was likely to come seeking any such thing he decided that the treasure was safe enough until evening. Then he went back the way he had come, emerged into the clearing behind the ice-house with thumbs stuck in his belt and a careless whistle flowing from his lips. Archie hailed him from the kitchen door and Tod waved and went on. Archie was all right, but he was curious about that can of tomato soup that Tod had borne away several days since, and Tod wasn't anxious to talk about that. He returned to his tent, deliberated and then went on down to the cove shore where Stuart and Tudor were hard at work under an ardent sun.

Tod seated himself on a bench and looked on critically. Tudor, returning with an armful of branches, wiped his forehead and joined him. Stuart continued to use his ax, frowning intently as he sought to cut a small dead hemlock in two. Tod offered advice, but Stuart pretended not to hear it. Finally the tree fell apart, Stuart added

both pieces to the pile, extracted a sliver from under a thumb-nail and scowled across.

"How much more do we have to have?" he demanded.

"Gosh," answered Tod, "you haven't started yet, old thing! Why, that would burn out in twenty minutes."

"Well, I'm going to rest awhile." Stuart seated himself and eyed the conical pile. "They ought to buy cord-wood for this silly fire," he said. "You've got to hunt for miles to find anything. Before camp's over they'll be dragging it from the top of Graystone. Have to if they want fires."

"Once when I was a kid," said Tod reminiscently, "some of us built a fire in an empty lot and played we were camping out. We got some potatoes and some wienies and some other things and cooked them."

"Like to see you cook wienies on that fire," muttered Stuart.

"One of the fellows brought a can of soup," continued Tod. "Ox-tail soup, it was. Well, we decided we'd begin with that, so we set it in the fire to get hot. Then we put the potatoes around in the ashes and started to cook the wienies, holding 'em out on sharpened sticks. Oh, yes, we were going to have coffee, too."

"What are you trying to do?" asked Tudor com-

plainingly. "Make us hungry? Because, if you are, you have!"

"No, but seeing this pile of wood reminded me. You see, we didn't have very good luck. I was putting coffee into the pot when there was a *bang* and that fire scattered all over the lot. One of the fellows got a nice hot ember down the back of his neck, and the way he went on was perfectly thrilling. We all got some of it; ashes or hunks of burning wood; in our eyes or ears or somewhere. It was very exciting for a minute. And then the can came down and hit Jim Speare on the head and he thought he was killed and forgot about the coal down his back."

"What can? What happened?" demanded Stuart.

"The soup can. You see, no one knew enough to punch a hole in the lid to let the steam out, and the silly thing exploded when it got hot enough. We found three or four of the wienies and a couple of the potatoes, but we decided to go home to dinner."

"Wish I'd seen it," said Tudor. "I suppose the can had to get the steam out somehow. Still, I don't believe I'd have thought of it, either."

"I wonder," said Tod thoughtfully, "if any kind of soup would have acted the same way. Do you suppose that if it had been—well, say, tomato

it would have exploded? Or is there something especially dangerous about ox-tail?"

"Any soup would have done it, you chump," said Stuart. "It stands to reason that when you generate steam like that—"

"But couldn't tomato steam be different from ox-tail steam?" asked Tod persuasively.

"Steam's steam," answered Stuart dogmatically. "If you don't believe it, try it and find out."

"Maybe I will some time," mused Tod.

"You're a nut," said Stuart. "Come on, Tudor, and let's get this beastly job finished. You're not doing anything, Tod. Better make yourself useful. Try along the cove there beyond the big rock, will you?"

"Try what?"

"Try to find some fuel, you poor fish!"

"Gee, I'd like to, awfully, Stu, but I'm afraid I wouldn't get the right kind. Besides, I promised Tommy Greene I'd play tennis with him. I hate to leave you fellows like this—"

Stuart grabbed a branch and threatened to throw it. "Get out of here, you lazy lummox!" he sputtered. "Get out before I slay you!"

Tod was rather absent-minded during the tennis and Tommy secured a victory as surprising to him as it was pleasing. Later, in the water, Stuart and Tudor decoyed Tod away from the float and

ducked him unmercifully. In the afternoon he forgave Tudor sufficiently to take him on at singles and beat him two sets, 6-3, 6-4. But he wasn't at his best even then, for thoughts of an impending triumphant revenge against his enemies kept his mind off the game.

Afterwards they went over to the ball field and watched the camp team practice for a game with Great Island. Coach Tyson had by now settled on his players and was fast turning them into a real team. There were fourteen fellows on the squad. Pillsbury easily retained his lead in the pitching department, with Littleton a close second and a younger boy named Grew showing more promise than performance. The catchers were Connover and James, the former experienced and remarkably steady, the latter a hard-fighting, ardent youth who was showing himself particularly clever with a bat. The infield consisted of Pinckney, Captain Lovell at second, Jordan and Boswell, the latter playing shortstop. In the outfield were Stuart Younge, Pettie and Burnham. Besides these Ty had retained Kincaid and Wallace as utility men, Wallace being the renowned "Punk" of Tent 6.

A scrub aggregation was opposing the nine this afternoon, and as Tod and Tudor reached the scene young Arnold Grew took over the duties of pitching and The Pill ambled over to sit in the

shade of the bushes by third base where most of the spectators had assembled. Seeing Tod, he started to join him, but then he caught sight of Tod's companion and angled off. Tudor noticed the maneuver and smiled. "I'm afraid Pillsbury doesn't like me," he said.

"He's scared of you, I guess," responded Tod. "At least, he told me yesterday that you were hard to get acquainted with."

"Not exactly the same thing, is it? I don't believe he's scared. He's a bit shy, I guess. I suppose I am a pretty poor 'mixer,' though. Not what you'd call neighborly."

"You certainly are not," said Tod. "Not that I blame you for keeping away from The Pill, though."

"Oh, I haven't been keeping away from him. Not consciously, anyway. It's just that he didn't attract me. I never do go out of my way much to scrape acquaintance, anyhow, Tod. It isn't that I dislike folks, but—well, I don't know. Maybe I figure it out that if I'm going to be friends with a fellow it'll happen without effort on my part. Something like that, probably."

"Well," replied Tod doubtfully, watching a scrub batsman scuttle to first while the ball streaked through Pitcher Grew's legs, "that may be all right for you, but I like to know chaps; lots of 'em. Maybe I'm too friendly, I don't know. I

do think you get more fun out of life, though, if you're in with a crowd."

"Trouble is that any crowd's likely to contain a number of fellows not worth knowing," replied Tudor. "I'd rather know fewer chaps and really enjoy them."

"I suppose there's something in that," Tod mused. Then, after a moment's silence: "If anything should happen to end—to terminate our friendship, Tudor," he went on gravely, "I want you to know that—that it has been a great pleasure to me."

Tudor turned and stared. "What the dickens!" he ejaculated. "Aren't you well? Got a sunstroke, Tod? Let's feel your head."

"Oh, no, I'm all right. Only things happen sort of unexpectedly sometimes, you know, and—and one never knows what a day—or an evening will bring forth. I just wanted you to know that it's been a pleasure to meet you, Tudor, and to associate with you. Try to think kindly of me—"

"Oh, shut up," laughed the other. "You talk like a movie title!"

"Of course," continued Tod somberly, "you'll still have Stu."

"What on earth are you raving about? Who wants stew? And why are we still going to have it? Quit being funny and tell me what you're trying—"

"Look out!"

Tod and Tudor rolled aside and a foul ball caromed past into the bushes. Tod climbed to his feet and plucked dead leaves and dry grass from his hair. "I'm going away from here," he stated decisively. "My life is too precious to be snuffed out just now. Coming along?"

Tudor shook his head. "No, Tod, I'll stick awhile. You go and lie down and maybe you'll feel a heap better by supper time."

Tod grinned. "If I felt any better right now I'd—" Then his expression changed suddenly and surprisingly. "Hey, there!" he shouted excitedly. "I'll find it! Don't you trouble!" He took a flying jump over Tudor, sprawled to his knees, was up again and had vanished in the undergrowth.

"What in the name of goodness ails him?" muttered Tudor, squirming around until he could look past his neighbors in the direction of Tod's flight. "Hanged if the chap isn't really barmy!"

Perhaps it did look so to Tudor, but Tod had a good reason for his panic. That foul ball had crashed into the bushes and saplings alarmingly close to where he had that morning concealed his newspaper-wrapped treasure! However, his fears were soon dispelled, for by the time he had begun an agitated search many yards away from the location of the ball one of the volunteer searchers

found it. But the incident left him greatly disturbed. What if it happened again and the ball fell close to that package? To move it was practically out of the question, for while it was concealed from the fellows along the edge of the field any activity on his part would arouse interest and curiosity and, dollars to doughnuts, some fellow would come peering in to see what he was up to. Of course there was nothing criminal in being discovered with a bundle, but such discovery would induce questions and Tod had no desire to answer such questions. In fact, it would please him best if he remained permanently unassociated with that bundle so far as the public was concerned. There appeared but one safe course to pursue and he pursued it. Retiring deeper into the thicket, he selected a spot apparently free from ant hills and sat down. It was very warm in there, for what breeze mitigated the heat on the ball field was cut off by the bushes. He hoped that Tudor, puzzled by his absence, would not come seeking him, and he simultaneously mopped his face and tried to think up a plausible explanation for conduct that might seem strange to his friend. Neither task was very successful, and it was with feelings of vast relief that, some five minutes later, he learned by the sounds coming from beyond the thicket that practice was over and the field was emptying.

At five-twenty he stood stiffly at attention while the bugle played and the flag came slowly down the tall staff. Then, when he and Stuart and Tommy Greene were half-way down to Number 6, he muttered an excuse, turned precipitately and fled back toward the buildings. To his deep satisfaction, Stuart didn't pursue him. When he reached the Recreation Hall he looked back. His recent companions were not in sight. He lounged carelessly past that building and went around the dining hall. From the kitchen came heartening odors and the sound of Pop's ire. "Didn't I tell you ten minutes ago to get those biscuits out? By golly, if I had a club handy—" The voice died away as Tod slipped into the path that took its winding way to the ball field.

He recovered his treasure and crossed the open quickly, knowing that at one point the fringe of trees that hid it from his own tent was regrettably thin. He struck into the woods again past third base, and, since here the trees were widely spaced and the path free of briars and like encumbrances, he broke into a brisk trot. Some three minutes brought him out at the end of the cove, and from there he doubled back to where the camp-fire awaited the magic touch of a match. This brief interim was the one period in all the day during which Tod could be practically certain of performing his nefarious deed unseen of his fellows.

Or, for that matter, of any one else. The shore, the cove, the point beyond were empty of human life. Dropping flat beside the six-foot pyre of drift wood and dry branches, Tod began the task of inserting the bundle he had brought into the center of the pile. It proved a difficult job, and he squirmed and thrust and grunted and perspired for several minutes, and got annoyingly and frequently painfully entangled with twigs and splinters, before the feat was accomplished. Then, panting hard, he arose and made a circuit of the pile, peering anxiously to see if the presence of his contribution to the bonfire could be detected. He decided that it couldn't and, experiencing some such commingling of triumph and anxiety as doubtless affected Guy Fawkes as he prepared to set off the gunpowder under King James the First, he hurried away up the path to his tent.

CHAPTER XII

THE DUD

Mess call had not, he was certain, been blown yet, but a glance at his watch showed him that it was past due. He reached the tent hot and nearly breathless, hoping that Stuart, at least, might have departed. He had, and so had all the others save Tommy. Tommy was trying to get a new lace in a sneaker, his tongue working agitatedly at one corner of his mouth. He was too much concerned in his task to heed Tod's dishevelled appearance, and the latter made a hurried and sketchy toilet, finishing just as the bugle sounded its tardy summons to supper. He beat Tommy to the hall by six lengths, falling into his seat a moment before Doctor Templer arose to ask grace. Tommy, midway between door and table, the cynosure of surreptitious and amused eyes, halted and stood in dreadful pink embarrassment until the Doctor's voice had ceased. Then, to a soft but universal tapping of spoons against tables, he blushingly sought his seat. Mr. Buckley, at the head of Tommy's table, gazed disapprovingly, but perhaps he thought that the youth

had suffered enough, for he forbore to utter a reprimand.

"Where," whispered Stuart, "did you go to?"

Tod poured milk into his glass and looked innocent. "I—I forgot something," he answered. "At least—well, I didn't just *forget* it, but I—I *remembered* it!"

Stuart regarded him witheringly. "Bulltoads," he said. "Look here, Tudor says you've gone dippy, and I guess he's just about right. He says you were talking utter piffle at the ball field and then jumped up and ran off into the woods and never came back. He really seemed worried about you. Of course I told him that when he'd known you longer he wouldn't mind a little thing like that, but just between ourselves, old stager—"

"Shut up and pass the biscuits, will you? There are just lots and lots of things beyond the —the comprehension of you and Tudor Nason, Stu, but worry not. All will be explained in due time. Likewise the butter, please."

"You're up to something," said Stuart darkly. "I've noticed for a couple of days that you've been acting funny. Better come clean, son, and let me in on it. You may need a friend before the dust settles. *Hey, what's the matter with you?*"

"N-nothing," gasped Tod, who had almost

choked over a drink of milk. "H-hit me . . . on the back!"

After supper Stuart and Tudor took Tod forcibly over to the porch of the recreation building and considered his case with much gravity. Tudor insisted that the stricken one was suffering from the effects of exhaustion resulting from a super-human effort to beat him at tennis complicated by a touch of heat, and he strongly recommended a lump of ice to be introduced down the sufferer's back. But, while he seemed to approve heartily of the antidote and craned his head as though to make certain that the ice-house was still where he had last seen it, Stuart disagreed with Tudor as to the diagnosis.

"I know the simple ape," he said. "He's always like this when he's up to something; has that mad look in his eyes and talks at random. He can't fool me! What he needs is to be induced to confide in his friends."

"Absolutely," agreed Tudor. "Just what sort of persuasion do you suggest? Moral or—ah—"

"Well, we might try moral first," said Stuart dubiously, "but I guess it would be quicker to—well, you know."

"I'll tell you this much," said Tod, grinning. "I'm not really crazy. If I seem to act—er—peculiarly, fellows, it's only because a great happiness is about to—about to—happen!"

"A happiness is about to happen," echoed Tudor. "Would it be permissible to ask to whom, Tod?"

"To me," Tod giggled. "Do you suppose I'd be so pleased if it was to you idiots? Let go of me now. You'll know all about it in—in due time."

"H'm," said Tudor. "I may be needlessly alarmed, Stu, but there's something in this wastrel's look that fills me with uneasiness. Tod, answer me this, and look me in the eye as you do it: Are Stu and I concerned in this matter?"

"Well," answered Tod touchingly, "any happiness of mine, Tudor, old dear, must, I guess, touch my friends. I don't say that you'll be as happy as I am, but seeing me happy ought to—"

"Bulltoads!" jeered Stuart.

That was a warm evening, and, although the air was damper and cooler down by the cove beach, few of those who gathered about the campfire appreciated it for its warmth. In fact, there was a general tendency to withdraw well beyond its influence, and the nearer benches were not popular. Tod sat on the ground, with Stuart propped against his knees and Tudor stretched near by. The flames shot upward into the velvety darkness and sparks spouted far above the tops of the nearer trees, or appeared to from where Tod watched. Mr. Pope was talking about the

impending water sports, and Tod, being one of the entrants for the camp meet, ought to have listened closely. But, although he tried to, his thoughts wandered. His gaze, however, didn't. It was fixed, straight ahead over Stuart's rumpled locks, on the fire. He was wondering in a fascinated way how long it would take for a gallon of liquid sealed in an air-tight container to reach the boiling point if it happened to be situated in the heart of the camp-fire. Later, while Doctor Templer was telling a story at which every one else laughed, he speculated as to how long such a liquid, having started to boil, would remain satisfied with its quarters. The center of the fire was white-hot now, and the mass was beginning to crumble inward. Once or twice Tudor, armed with a pole, arose and mended it, pushing an escaped brand back into the flames, prodding the blazing pile into a new eruption of sparks.

Some one tinkled a mandolin as the Doctor ended. A second instrument responded, and a third. Fellows cleared their throats, saying "Hem!" experimentally. Tod wriggled his knees, commanding Stuart's attention. "Better put some more wood on before singing starts," he advised. "It'll be out if you don't."

"It's all right," answered the other lazily. But Tudor arose and repaired to the supplementary pile behind on the beach. He was pulling a fine

big branch toward the fire, watched approvingly by Tod, when Mr. Pope's voice came from the darkness beyond the red glare.

"I wouldn't put any more on, Nason," he called. "That will last us, I guess. If any fellow's chilly he can move closer."

Amidst the chuckles Tod spoke urgently. "It's cold over here, Mr. Pope," he said. "Couldn't we have one more log, sir?"

But his companions proved traitors. "Cold!" groaned Stuart. "I'm roasting!"

"You're crazy, Tod!" "Roll him into it!" "No more wood!"

Tod subsided, watching the fire anxiously. The singing began. He joined his voice, but, since his thoughts were not on the song, he got the words wrong and Stuart protested. Suddenly a brand settled down with a thud, a shower of golden sparks shot upward and Tod was lying on his face. Stuart, deprived unexpectedly of his support, pointed his feet skyward. "What's the idea?" he expostulated indignantly although in whispers. Tod raised his head, saw that the alarm had been false, sighed and took up his position again. Grumbling, Stuart settled back and went on singing. Tod waited, hope dwindling each moment. Every time a fagot dropped or a piece of green wood burst into sudden steam and hissing he jumped convulsively and was

stared at reproachfully by Stuart. The fire lessened, became a mound of orange and red embers above the incandescent bed. A few fagots burned or smoked about the edge. Tod fell into deep dejection. His plot had failed. Vengeance had been denied him. The white heart of the fire turned into gray ashes. Doctor Templer was starting the prayer. Camp-fire was over. The bomb was only a dud!

Tod lay awake long that night, disillusioned and embittered. Science had played him false. Chemistry had proved itself undependable. He wondered what the cock-sure Stuart would say now about steam being steam! Unfortunately he couldn't confound Stu with the evidence, for if there was one thing that Tod was determined should ever remain a secret from Stuart and Tudor it was the incident of the can of tomato soup that didn't explode! Well, another time he would know enough to use ox-tail. Only, there couldn't be another time; not without the connivance of Jim Pope, and Tod felt certain that the councilor would not again aid him. Gosh, if one Natural Law was just bunk, what about the rest of them? Tod fell asleep at last gravely suspicious of the Law of Gravitation!

Directly that breakfast was over the next morning Tod set off for the scene of the disappointing camp-fire. Curiosity clamored to be appeased.

With a stick he poked about in the middle of the big heap of ashes and half-charred fragments, and presently he was rewarded. Out came the remains of that gallon can. The explanation presented itself after a moment's study. Somehow, before the contents of the tin had reached the boiling stage, the solder had melted. The can, blackened, encrusted with ashes, lay before him in three parts; a cylinder sprung apart at the seam, a disk that had been the bottom and a disk that had been the lid. Tod felt a distinct relief. Although his experiment had failed, at least his belief in the theory had been restored. Some day, he decided resolutely, he would try again.

Pending the formulation of another plan for revenge, Tod concealed his disappointment under a gay and careless exterior. For a day or two Stuart and Tudor viewed his every move with suspicion, but as nothing happened they forgot their premonitions. The nine played another game and won it, not without difficulty since their opponents, the summer campers on Great Isle, were older and more experienced. Most of them were, in fact, college fellows; the catcher and third basemen even members of varsity teams. However, to even matters Graystone was permitted to use three councilors, and Messrs. Tyson, Gould and Lassiter did yeoman service. It was "Gussy" Gold's hit in the seventh—an extra—inning that

brought in the deciding run and gave the victory to the home team.

A few days later the water sports were held, and Tod and Stuart finished a close second in the canoe doubles; which surprised them both since they had done little real practicing. Tod was also placed in the junior fifty-yards swim. The event was designed to develop talent for the inter-camp carnival held near the end of the season, and Councilor Pope appeared satisfied with the result. Meanwhile Tod and Stuart had gone on one of the weekly overnight hikes and had lived to tell the tale.

Only eight fellows were taken at a time, a fact which prevented Tudor from making the trip with his chums. By the time Stuart had convinced him that he ought to go along, the limit of numbers had been reached. The councilors took turns at conducting the hikes, and it was Mr. Buckley who was in charge on this occasion. Nothing vastly exciting occurred. They started off from camp at two o'clock one afternoon, took the trail that went over the south shoulder of Mount Graystone and landed at about five on the shore of a small lake set high up amongst the pines on the western slope of the mountain. It was a twelve-mile journey, and up-hill most of the way along trails not notoriously smooth, and when camp was pitched two of the party at least

were quite ready to rest. It was good fun, though, and Tod remembered for a long time that evening about the small fire with the silent lake black before them and the tall trees closing them about. Yes, and the mosquitoes, as well! Tod shared a poncho tent with Stuart, tight quarters for a warmish night, and spent much of the time dedicated to slumber in fighting off a horde of hungry insects. They had wisely brought squares of netting, but Stuart had grumbled about not having enough air and so they had not used their square. Afterwards, in the small hours, Tod had tried desperately to find it, and Stuart, awakened by his companion's groping, had aided in the search, but the thing had mysteriously disappeared. Restless movements from the other sleepers indicated that the mosquitoes' attack was general all along the line, but that knowledge brought small comfort to Tod. Nor did the evident fact that Stuart was able to sleep, if uneasily, while he laid awake and listened for one of the buzzing foe to alight and be annihilated. In the morning the wisp of netting was discovered under Stuart's blanket.

Even a well-nigh sleepless night, though, was nothing to trouble about in the face of a glorious sun that wiped the gray mist from the lake and warmed chill bodies. There was a plunge in the cool water and then a heavenly breakfast, and after that they did as they liked until noon. Many

of them had brought fishing rods, for the lake was celebrated as the home of giant, hard-fighting bass. Since, however, neither Tod's rod nor Stuart's happened to be of a kind adaptable to a shoulder pack they had not been brought along, and the fishing honors went to Mr. Buckley and Tommy Greene. "Buck" landed a two-and-a-half-pound bass and Tommy, fishing for the same kind of prize with the same kind of bait, brought in eight good-sized white perch! As there were but two boats available, a third being scarcely better than a sieve, Tod and Stuart built a log raft with the aid of an ax and some lengths of rope and twine and managed a tour of the lake on it. Well, not quite a complete tour, either, for the raft broke apart before the circuit was made and they finished by swimming. After that it was necessary to dry their clothes before starting back, and to that end they made a hot fire and went in swimming while shirts and shorts steamed before the blaze. Mr. Buckley went off with the others on a jaunt up the side of a cliff, leaving them sitting, far from disconsolate, in a patch of sunlight. As Tod succinctly remarked, "Why climb cliffs when you can sit in the sun?"

Dinner found all hands hungry again, and the immutable canned beans, frizzled ham, bread and tea tasted better than any eight-course dinner. The dessert was sweet chocolate. They broke

camp shortly after the midday meal and, to Tod's surprise, the trip home was quite as hard as the journey up there! "Gee," he confided to Stuart, "I thought going down hill was easy, but it isn't. Say, don't your legs hurt?" However, they were back at Graystone in time for a late swim and with no more serious casualties than foot bruises and lame muscles. Oh, yes, and one sore thumb. The thumb was Tommy Greene's. Tommy had run a hook into it so far that Mr. Buckley had had to cut it out. The hook, that is. Tommy still retained the thumb—such as it was!

CHAPTER XIII

THE TENNIS TEAM MAKES A VISIT

August arrived; and with it came golden-rod, and Tommy Greene developed hay-fever. At evening the crickets were noisier than ever. Extra blankets were distributed and fires in the big chimney-place in the recreation hall became frequent. Life went with more zest. Tod and Tudor played tennis every morning, sometimes against each other, when possible in opposition to some other couple. Mr. Rhodes had agreed to enter them as a doubles team in the match with Elbow Bay Camp, and they began to think fairly well of themselves. Tudor had improved his service somewhat, though not impressively, and Tod was playing far better than he ever had. Syd Rhodes, if not a remarkable performer, at least knew how the game should be played and had the ability to impart his knowledge to others. He spent a good deal of time with Tod and Tudor and they profited by his instructions.

The Tennis Team went down the lake on a Thursday morning in the camp launch, five boys

and Syd Rhodes. Elbow Bay Camp was a good nine miles by water, but the slim launch could do its twelve knots when pushed and they reached their destination at half-past ten. The Camp was situated on a point that jutted far out from the southern shore of the lake and well toward the lower end of Elbow Bay. It accommodated fewer fellows than Graystone and was somewhat less elaborate. But the invaders found a hospitable welcome awaiting them and four good clay courts on which to exhibit their skill. The singles were to be played before dinner and the doubles after, and at a few minutes before eleven the match started. Tod was opposed to a fellow named Chardon, much older and certainly much larger. Afterwards he learned that Chardon was the best player at Elbow Bay. Tudor drew a heavily-built chap named Jamison, Gordon Pettie met Carlson and Harry Graves faced a younger opponent named Lamport. Lou Burnham, who had accompanied the team as an alternate, constituted with Syd Rhodes the Graystone cheering section.

Tod knew after the first game that his opponent would prove too good for him, but he made an excellent fight and, after losing the first set, 4-6, won the second, 7-5. But he weakened then and allowed Chardon to take the deciding set about as he wished. Chardon was 5-1 before Tod got his spunk back to wrest a second game. The set

went to the Elbow Bay boy with the next four serves. Meanwhile Tudor had lost to Jamison, 4-6, 2-6, and Pettie had downed his adversary in straight sets. The match between Harry Graves and his youthful adversary went to a third set and stayed there a long time before Graves finally overcame the enemy and took the encounter, 6-4, 4-6, 12-10.

Graystone and Elbow Bay had split even as a result of the forenoon encounters, each having won two and lost two. On the whole the result was satisfactory since it left the decision to the afternoon. The visitors were treated royally at table, and Tudor confided to Tod that, without wishing to appear disloyal to Graystone, he was forced to acknowledge that when it came to providing for the inner man Elbow Bay had the edge! Perhaps, though it is scarcely likely, the hosts made a little extra effort that noon, but whether they did or didn't, there was both chicken and ice-cream on the menu, and any fellow will tell you that that is a combination difficult to beat!

After dinner there was a really enjoyable entertainment on the radio for the visitors while the Elbow Bay campers retired to their tents for the half-hour siesta. At two o'clock play began again. Tod and Tudor had drawn Chardon and Lamport as opponents, leaving Carlson and Jamison for Graves and Pettie. On a third court Syd

Rhodes and Lou Burnham engaged two of the Elbow Bay councilors in a friendly encounter.

Graves and Pettie found themselves no match for their adversaries and went down to defeat in straight sets, 6-4, 6-2. As by that time Tod and Tudor had dropped the first set, 3-6, and had just pulled even at 4-all on the second, it seemed pretty evident that Elbow Bay was due to take the tournament. Even if, which looked at the moment far from likely, Tod and Tudor managed to win their match the best Graystone could get would be a tie. That first set had slipped away from them almost before they were aware of the fact that they were losing it. Tudor had twice lost on his service and Tod, not to be quite outdone, had once lost on his, by which time Elbow Bay had four games and Graystone two. Tod had put the seventh game away, however, by a return to his serving form, and things had looked brighter. But Lamport had sent over two serves that couldn't be handled, Tod had messed an easy kill at the net and finally Chardon had smashed down the left side-line for the winning point. Then Tudor, with the best intentions in the world, had twice double-faulted as a start on the ninth game, and, although he and Tod played desperately to put the score even at 30, the opponents took the next two points, game and set.

The playing went faster as the couples found

their second wind in the next set. Tudor recovered from a sort of stage-fright and he and Tod each won on his serve. The games alternated until the set stood at 4-all. Then Tudor struck rough going and dropped the ninth. It looked to be all over at that point, but Tod didn't see it so, and shot around the court like a small brown streak. The opponents helped by dropping the fourth point on a double-fault and Tudor made it 30-40 a moment later when he smashed a fast one at Lamport's feet. However, the opponents won the next point and the score stayed at deuce for some time. In the end Chardon's drive to back-court was out by an inch and Tod made it 5-all on a cross-court return that caught Lamport on the wrong foot.

By that time the other courts had emptied and the players had joined the considerable audience. Chardon and Lamport took the next game rather easily, but Tod and Tudor came back hard and captured the following one. In the end the set went to Graystone, 8-6, and honors were even. The players rested a few minutes and Mr. Rhodes gave a few words of counsel. The final set began as had the second, with all four players winning on service, but finally Tod and Tudor broke through on Lamport, and Tod kept the advantage by annexing the subsequent game with a slashing serve that was only twice returned. The adver-

saries made it 3-4, but Graystone's representatives finally took a prolonged deuce game and put the set at 5-3. Tod and Tudor tried desperately to end the battle then, but over-anxiety defeated them, for twice easy returns were netted, while Tod missed a third point when he drove far out of court in an attempt to get the ball past Chardon. Both sides were tiring and growing a trifle wild. With the score 5-4, Tod and Tudor leading, another deuce set seemed imminent; the more so when the Graystone players lost the first two points. Tudor, however, captured the next and then Tod made it 30-all by a neat placement. A prolonged rally followed, the ball skimming back and forth over the net many times before Tod lifted a high lob to the opponents' back-line and Chardon, trying for a fast return slammed it into the net. It was then set-point, and Tod waited anxiously for the serve. He had been at pains to get his return past Chardon, at the net, which was not an easy thing to do, and, when done, put the ball to Lamport's fore-hand. This time he decided to take a chance with the unexpected. Lamport's first serve was a fault; the second, while swift, was not difficult, and, instead of returning it across court, Tod put a full swing against it and sped it straight at the net man. Chardon was so certain that the ball would go past at his right to his partner that he was caught

almost napping. The return was sent straight at his breast and he had to move quickly to swing his racket in front of it, a motion actuated as much by self-defense as by intent to win the point. The ball struck, rebounded fast. Tod, who had run back to the base-line, stepped to the right, poised for a back-hand stroke. But there was no need for it. He dropped his racket out of the path of the ball at the instant of Tudor's cry of *"Let it go!"* The ball struck four inches out of court, and point, game, set and match was theirs.

The audience applauded generously and Tod and Tudor shook hands with their defeated opponents across the net. "We'll have to try that again," declared Chardon, breathless but smiling. "We'll try to fix up a return match. What do you say?"

"Great," Tod replied. "Our courts aren't quite as good as yours, but maybe you won't mind that. Let's talk it up."

It developed, however, that Mr. Rhodes had already broached the project and that Elbow Bay was quite agreeable to it. The question of date, however, was left to the future. The Graystone party returned to the launch, escorted by most of the camp, and sped away to the sound of a hearty cheer.

"Too bad we couldn't have won," observed

Harry Graves as the launch pointed its nose toward South Elbow Island.

"Well, the way I look at it," replied Syd cheerfully, "we did win. When the visiting team ties I always think of it as having come out ahead. After all, you know, the fellow who plays at home, in his own surroundings and with his friends around him, has a bit the better of it. So I'm perfectly satisfied with this expedition and with you chaps. Every last one of you played a much better game than you've been playing at camp. You had to, by golly! They've got a couple of clever tennis sharks back there. That fellow Chardon is good. And so is Jamison. If those two paired they'd be a great team."

"Glad they didn't then," said Tudor. "We had all we could manage as it was. Lamport's pretty good, Mr. Rhodes. If he wasn't a bit weak on his back-hand he'd be corking."

"Not as steady as Chardon, though. By the way, Nason, you can better your own back-hand a bit by not crowding the ball. You stand too close to it, son. Keep away and give your arm a good long swing. I'll show you what I mean tomorrow."

"How did you come out in your match, sir?" asked Gordon Pettie.

"Only played one set. Braden beat, 6-4. I'd have won, though, if I hadn't committed every

last fault I'm always warning you fellows against! However, Burnham avenged me."

"Did you lick your chap, Lou?" asked Tod.

"Sure." Lou grinned. "Both sets; 6-2 and 6-3. He was easy. That's why I picked him."

Since there was plenty of time at their disposal, the councilor guided the launch along the east side of Great Island and then pointed the bow on a straight course for Hobbs' Cove and home. This took them between Eagle and Bellinger's Islands, and, as they went past the northern shore of the latter, Tudor asked: "Mr. Rhodes, is there any mystery about this island? Tod here tries to make me think it's haunted or something."

"Mystery? Why, no, not that I ever heard of. The place is sort of run-down of late, but there's no mystery to that. Mr. Bellinger has lost interest in it, I suppose, since his son died. I'm not sure that he's here this summer."

"I think he is," said Tod. "The steamer stopped there the day I came up and a gentleman got off. Maybe he wasn't Mr. Bellinger, though."

"Oh, it probably was he. What did he look like, Hale?"

"Why, he was about average height, I guess. Maybe fifty years old. Rather slightly built. Had a queer face."

"Sounds like him. What do you mean by a queer face?"

Tod studied the sun-flecked waves for a moment. "Well, I don't know what I do mean, I guess. He was rather nice looking; looked like a gentleman, I mean; but he was very pale, sort of a—sort of ashy pale; and he had funny eyes. He didn't look as if he was quite awake— No, that isn't it, either. He looked as if he was miles off; his thoughts, I mean. His hat blew off on the boat and I caught it, and he thanked me. He had a nice voice, only it sounded flat, without much expression; and then his eyes—" Tod shook his head, smiling apologetically. "Guess I can't explain just how he struck us, Stu Younge and me."

"I haven't seen him since last summer," said Mr. Rhodes, "but your description fits pretty well. I dare say he's losing his grip. He's had a good deal of trouble, and, I suppose, he isn't the sort that can stand much of it."

"Did you say his son died, sir?" asked Tod.

"Yes, here on the island the summer before last. He was injured in the World War; gassed, I believe. He used to come up here quite early every summer and stay until away into the fall. Just he and his father and a servant or two. That was the eldest boy; must have been about twenty-eight when he died. The youngest died during the war. No, a few days after the armistice, it was. That was very sad. He didn't get across but was an instructor at a flying field out

west. A lieutenant, I think. It seems, as I recall the story, that the armistice had been signed and that he was ready to go home. One of the men at the field asked him to go up with him and he went. The plane crashed and he was killed. The other fellow was unhurt, or only slightly damaged. I think that was a hard blow to Mr. Bellinger. The boy was only about twenty. Then the other son who had been in a hospital in France for months was sent back with his health shattered and, if what I've heard is true, his mind not much better. Some time between the death of the second son and the death of the older one the mother died. I guess it's all been a little too much for Mr. Bellinger. Folks up here were surprised when he returned last summer. You'd naturally think he wouldn't have wanted to see that island again. But he came back with a colored man to cook and look after him, and he was still there when I went away in September. And now you tell me he's returned again. Well—" Mr. Rhodes was silent a moment. Then, with a slight shake of his head, he added: "I guess the only mystery connected with Bellinger's Island, Nason, is why the poor old chap comes back to it. Still, I don't know, either. They were there together so many summers, he and the son, that it may have pleasant memories for him, in spite of what happened in the end. Too bad,

though, he doesn't look after it better. It used to be quite an attractive island. Now it's pretty much on the blink, I'd say."

"Is he wealthy?" asked Gordon Pettie. "I mean, mightn't it be that he can't afford to keep the place up?"

"Bellinger has tons of money, my boy. You ought to know the name. You live in Philadelphia, don't you?"

"Gee, you mean the car man?" exclaimed Pettie. "Is that the Bellinger?"

"That's he. I don't think he has anything to do with the business now, though. I remember reading several years ago that it had been bought by a Western company. Still, there's no question about his wealth. No, it isn't lack of means that keeps him from trimming up the underbrush and cutting out the dead wood back there. He's just living in the past, I guess. Well, here we are, gang. Sorry there isn't time for a swim."

Tod recounted Mr. Rhodes' information about the pale-faced man they had encountered on the steamer to Stuart that evening, and Stuart said finally: "Well, he certainly looked like a guy who had seen plenty of trouble, didn't he? Remember the funny way he had of not seeming to see you? I'll bet he's off his bean, eh? I don't mean out-and-out crazy, but—"

"I don't think so at all," said Tod stoutly.

"He's just—just melancholy or—or something. Wouldn't you be, you poor prune, if all that had happened to you?"

"Well," Stuart replied, "I might be melancholy, but more likely I'd be plumb nutty. And I guess he is, no matter what you think, Toddy. And let me tell you this, young feller, I wouldn't set foot on that island for all the wealth of Momus!"

"Meaning, I presume, Midas, you poor moron!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE FAME OF WINALONA

THE PILL continued to win games for the nine, and Graystone's reputation for baseball prowess grew and spread. There were more than a dozen camps within a twenty-mile radius of Hobbs' Cove, although not all offered baseball opposition. By the first week in August Graystone had played seven games and won five. She had pretty well "cleaned up" the Lake and adversaries were becoming scarce. Nonassett came over for a return contest and was again defeated and Graystone crossed the lake to Farwell and took revenge. Camp Larrimore, for a number of seasons past Graystone's principal rival in all athletic endeavors, remained about the only baseball possibility in sight, and custom prescribed that Graysfone and Larrimore should play their game near the end of the season. On that occasion water sports, to which a number of neighboring camps were invited, occupied the forenoon and the baseball game was held in the afternoon. Now, however, since the nine craved new victims and the supply had seemingly run out, the idea

of inviting Larrimore to play a preliminary game was advanced. It was discussed at length one night about the camp-fire, but in the end the plan was abandoned, and the team was left with only two contests in sight prior to the Larrimore engagement. Since more than a fortnight intervened, its case seemed hard. There was talk of arranging games with several camps at some distance, but when the necessity of paying railroad fares was faced the enthusiasm waned. It was at this juncture that Tod sought to be helpful.

It was somewhat of a coincidence that he should have idly picked up a magazine in the recreation hall the next forenoon—it happened to be raining that day; otherwise he would never have been there—and that it should have opened to an advertising page devoted to presenting the attractions of numerous summer camps. There were half a dozen fellows about him, amongst them Stuart and Tudor and Ted Connover and Don Lovell, and he was listening to Don's suggestion that a number of them chip in and send for a football so that they might put in some practice before they returned to school, and so he wasn't really interested in the advertisements. Nevertheless, just as he was about to toss the magazine back on the table beside him his eye was caught and held. At the foot of the page was the modest advertisement of "Camp Winalona, Lake Mi-

rage." Now Lake Mirage, lay, as the crow was supposed to fly, no more than three miles south of the lower end of Lake Tole. It was a very small body of water, and lying so close to the larger lake it very naturally got lost sight of. That Tod knew anything at all about it was purely accidental. During the time he and Stuart had loitered about the steamer wharf at South Landing that afternoon some five weeks ago he had chanced to see a small motor bus standing across the street with the sign "Lake Mirage" on it. He had promptly forgotten the incident, but now memory recalled it. That the Lake Mirage of the advertisement was the same Lake Mirage served by the bus was made certain by the address supplied: "Railway station, South Landing," proclaimed the advertisement. Tod read the information twice. Then he surreptitiously removed the corner of that page and placed it in a pocket. After that, no longer attentive to Lovell's remarks, he stared past Tudor's shoulder at the blazing, snapping logs in the big fireplace. Tod had an idea, and for the rest of the forenoon and part of the afternoon he developed it. He borrowed a map from Mr. Lassiter and carefully computed the distance with the aid of a pair of dividers from the Graystone Landing to Camp Winalona, finding it to be eight and seven-tenths miles. The distance from South Landing to the

nearest point on Lake Mirage by road was two and three-quarters miles. There was, Tod noted, a stream indicated on the map running from the small lake to the large one, but that the Graystone launch would find it navigable was far from certain. He decided to exclude the stream—Thompson's Brook—from his calculations. The rain stopped at about four o'clock and he went in swimming with some thirty others, still, however, too busy with his planning to offer much in the way of conversation. Tudor remarked disgustedly that he was "about as communicative as a clam."

During the course of the afternoon and evening Tod sought, with apparently no particular motive, the society for a brief time of as many of the councilors as he could discover. Always, before he parted company with them, he managed to introduce the words "Camp Winalona." In no case did they strike a responsive chord. The ignorance of the Graystone councilors on the subject of Camp Winalona was universal and complete. In bed that night he decided that if the councilors had never heard of the camp it was extremely unlikely that any of the fellows had. For some reason the conclusion brought him satisfaction and he went to sleep promptly thereafter and slept the peaceful, untroubled sleep of the innocent.

"I see," he observed casually to Stuart the next morning as they sat in the sunlight on the edge of the Office porch, "I see that Winalona's having another big season."

"So," began Stuart flippantly from force of habit, "is your old—" But as Tod seemed to be really serious he switched to: "I'll bite. Who's Winnie Loonie?"

Tod glanced at him briefly. "Winalona, I said; Camp Winalona. I suppose," he added sarcastically, "you're going to tell me you never heard of it!"

"I may have, but I don't remember it. Gee, there are so many camps nowadays—"

"Maybe, but you ought to know about Winalona. You're a baseball nut, and I should think you'd know about baseball teams. Come on. Let's go down for inspection."

"Hold on a minute. What about this Camp Wina—whatever it is? Mean that they play baseball there?"

"Well, what do you think?" asked Tod scornfully. "I just told you that they were having another big season, didn't I? Perhaps you thought I was talking about ice-hockey!"

"Well, don't be so snifty! I never heard of the place. What about it? Where is it?"

"You're crazy! You must have heard of Winalona. Bet you're the only fellow who hasn't!

It's down at Lake Mirage, two or three miles below South Landing, of course. What are you trying to do? String me?"

"No, but listen, Tod. Are they really good? Where'd you hear about 'em?"

"I read the paper, for one thing. And I keep my ears open. I don't know what you call good, but I'd say that any ball team that wins all its games was pretty fair. I may be mistaken, of course—"

"Oh, cut out the sarcasm," said Stuart irritably. "It's funny that if this camp is so blamed good we don't play 'em. Must be some catch to it!"

Tod stretched, yawned and got to his feet. "Too far away, probably. Well, I'm going down. You'd better, too. That tent wants to be in good shape this morning. We've got through the week so far and if we can keep up the good work we might get the trophy."

"I don't see," murmured Stuart, "why it would be too far. Not if it's only a couple of miles from South Landing. Maybe it's more, though."

"I don't think so. A map would tell you. If you take my advice, though, you'll let Winalona alone. You guys are pretty good as long as you play teams like Overlook, but don't get too ambitious, old son."

"How do you get that way?" asked Stuart indignantly as he accompanied Tod down the slope. "We've got the best ball team in this part of the state! Best camp team, I mean. And if Winalona hasn't lost a game it's because she met a lot of weak teams, I'll bet! I'm going to ask Don about it. Or Ty. Maybe he tried for a game with those guys and couldn't get it."

"Maybe he knew better than to try," said Tod, grinning exasperatingly.

"Piffle! Look here, do they play their councilors? If they do that they might win a lot of games easily."

Tod shrugged. "How do I know? Forget your old baseball for a minute. When are you going out in the canoe again? We ought to get a lot more practice the next two weeks. And if we decide to go on the long hike—"

"To-morrow," said Stuart. "Morning. If we could get a game with those fellows—"

"Hi, Vic! Vic Jordan!" Tod called to a boy who was passing. "Listen, Vic. Stu here says he's never heard of Winalona. Camp Winalona, you know, down at Lake Mirage. And he calls himself a ball player!"

The third baseman paused and observed Stuart with amused surprise. "Get out!" he ejaculated. "That right, Stu?"

"I didn't say I'd never heard of it," Stuart

objected apologetically. "I said I didn't remember it. Anyway, if those fellows can win every game they play they must use their councilors!"

Tod looked at Vic inquiringly. Vic moved his gaze toward the column of smoke arising from the kitchen chimney. "Well," he replied after a moment evidently given to careful consideration, "I never heard that they did, Stu. Did you ever hear it, Tod?"

Tod shook his head. "No, but it isn't anything that would interest me much. They might do it for all I know."

"Well, hang it, if they're so good why don't we have a go at them, Vic?"

Vic Jordan looked a trifle confused, Tod thought. Evidently the question had never presented itself to him. "I—I don't know, I'm sure," he said. "Unless they didn't want to come over here—"

"Up," corrected Tod gently.

"I mean up here. That might be it. Well, I've got to run up to the Office and—"

"We could go down there, couldn't we?" Stuart persisted. "I'm going to find out why we don't play 'em. Must be some reason."

"Sure!" Vic waved and departed, suggesting by his manner that parting brought him no sorrow. Tod smiled secretly.

An hour later he saw Stuart and Captain Don

Lovell in earnest conversation over in South Street. By swimming time it was evident that a number of fellows who had never before heard of Camp Winalona were now deeply interested in it. Gordon Pettie was heard to assert with conviction that "Ty ought to get us a chance at that Winalona gang." By dinner time there was a report current to the effect that a game with the far-famed Winalona team was being arranged. In the afternoon, breaking a quasi-engagement to play tennis with Tudor, Tod strolled over to the diamond and hobnobbed with the players. It was very evident that Winalona had become an absorbing subject of interest there. Fellows who were extremely hazy as to the location of that camp related remarkable instances of its baseball skill. Coach Tyson was quoted as having declared that if Winalona could be induced to play there would certainly be a game.

Tod sauntered back to the tent very pleased with the march of events. He found Joe Graves there writing a letter. He laid himself on his bunk, placed his hands under his head and gave himself to intensive thought. At length Joe finished his task and Tod remarked thoughtfully: "Bet you Don Lovell will try to get the credit for the ball game with Camp Winalona."

"Say, I've been hearing a heap about that business," answered Joe. "What's it all about?"

"Well, it's Stu's idea, Joe. You've heard of Winalona, of course."

"Sure," replied Joe without batting an eyelash.

"And what a corking ball team they have. Mind you, I don't say it's good. I only know what I hear and see. Well, anyway, we need games and Stu thought it would be a dandy scheme to get a game with Winalona. Of course we might get beaten, but that doesn't matter if we have the fun, I guess. Stu sprung the idea on Don Lovell, and now, I understand, Ty's going to try to date 'em up. That's all right, but you know how Lovell likes to hog things and get into the spot-light, and—well, it seems to me that Stu ought to get some of the credit. It was his idea in the first place, wasn't it?"

"Sure! Still, I don't see that it matters such a lot. About who gets the credit, I mean."

"You don't? Don't you think it would be quite an honor for us if a team that's won all its games and has a big reputation was to play us? Of course we're good; I don't say we aren't; but you know mighty well, Joe, that the teams we play aren't much. What I think is just this. It wouldn't be any more than Stu deserves if they let him go down to Winalona and make the dicker. I'll bet you, anyway, a camp like that wouldn't pay any attention to Ty if he tried to date them

up over the telephone. And writing wouldn't be much better. Stu could do a whole lot better in ten minutes of talk. Between you and me, it isn't going to be any cinch to get a camp like Winalona to talk turkey with us."

Joe seemed still a trifle puzzled, but he agreed readily enough. "Sure, I guess that's right. I guess those fellows can get all the games they want. I don't see, though, how Stu could get down to Lake Mirage and back the same day, and I guess the Chief wouldn't let him stay away over night."

"That's easy. All he'd have to do would be to paddle across to Lakeside in the morning and get the steamer down. He'd have plenty of time to get to Winalona and back before the afternoon trip."

"Yes, that's so. Maybe they'll let him do that."

"They won't if some one doesn't suggest it," replied Tod gloomily. "Naturally, Stu wouldn't want to."

"Why don't you?"

"Well, I would only I'm sort of thick with Stu and fellows might think I was plugging him. I thought I'd ask Punk to bring it up at camp-fire to-night. There's pretty sure to be a pow-wow then. After Punk had suggested it I could sort of second it, and so could you and some others.

Or, look here!" Tod seemed to have been struck by a sudden and luminous thought. "You could do it better than Punk! He talks so blame slow, you know. I say, that's the scheme! You say 'Wouldn't it be better to see them than to telephone them, sir? And since it was Stu Younge who first thought of the scheme why couldn't he go down and talk with the Winalona folks?' Get the idea?"

"Yes, but—oh, hang it, Tod, it isn't my funeral!"

"Oh, well, of course, if you care to adopt that attitude," said Tod in injured tones. "I just thought you'd like to do that much for a tentmate. However—"

"Well, but—wait a second! What was it I'd have to say?"

CHAPTER XV

STUART GOES ON AN ERRAND

"It would be lots of fun," said Tod. He and Stuart and Tudor were strolling down toward the landing in the gathering dusk. "If you liked I could paddle over to Lakeside with you. It wouldn't take us long."

"It listens all right," said Stuart, "but what makes you think they'll let me do it?"

"Why wouldn't they? It was your idea and—"

"Whose idea?"

"Why, yours, of course. Wasn't it? Didn't you say to me this morning at the Office that we'd ought to have a game with Winalona and that you meant to see about it?"

"Why, yes, but it was you who spoke first of the place. I told you I'd never heard of it."

"Maybe I did mention it, come to think of it, but it was certainly you who sprung the big idea of getting a game with them. Now wasn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so." Stuart tried not to sound flattered. "But that doesn't mean that they'll let me go down there."

"Well, you'd be glad to go if they would let

you, wouldn't you? Gosh, I'd like the chance mighty well. And, say, you could bring back that football we decided to send for. I guess you could find one in South Landing."

"If some one would come along with me I'd like it better."

"Wish I could, but I'm tied up. How about you, Tudor? Couldn't you go?"

"Yes, I could if they'd give me permission, although I wouldn't be much use when it came to talking baseball down there."

"Oh, Stu would attend to the baseball part of it. You'd just go for the ride. Bet you'll have a corking time, too!"

Stuart laughed. "It's mighty funny, the way you take it for granted that they're going to send me down there. If you think I'm going to propose it you're mistaken, old son."

"I don't. Somebody's bound to, though. The fellows think you deserve it, and when the subject comes up at camp-fire to-night the suggestion's going to be made."

"Who by?" asked Stuart. "You?"

"I'll do it if no one else does," answered Tod stoutly.

It was Mr. Tyson who introduced the subject quite early in the evening. It had been proposed, he said, that they try to arrange a game with Camp Winalona, at Lake Mirage. "We

ought to get two or three more games before we play Larrimore," he continued, "and I don't know where to look for them. I understand that this Winalona outfit is pretty good. They've won all their games this season, I believe. The difficulty is that I don't know a thing about the camp; who's in charge down there or who the councilors are or anything. And," he added with a laugh, "I can't find anybody who does know!"

"You say it's at Lake Mirage?" asked the Doctor. "There is a camp there, I know, and I'm pretty certain that the name of Winalona is familiar to me. Seems to me I know something about it, but I can't think what it is. Look here, Jim, haven't we a camp directory somewhere?"

"We had one last year, Chief, but I don't know where it is now. I don't see why it isn't easy enough to call the Winalona folks up on the 'phone and ask for the director of athletics or the baseball coach."

"Oh, we can, of course," replied Mr. Tyson, "only I'd much rather know to whom I'm talking. However, if you think it's all right to play them, Chief, I'll see what I can do."

"Why, I suppose it is. We don't seem to know much about them, but I presume they're quite all right. If they weren't I think I'd have heard it. That sort of information travels faster than the other. You'll probably have difficulty in ar-

ranging a date, however. It's a bit late in the season, you know."

"May I suggest something, sir?" It was Joe Graves, speaking in quite his most impressive manner. "Wouldn't we stand a better show of making arrangements with Camp Winalona if we went to see them instead of trying to do business by telephone?"

There was a distinct murmur of concurrence, led by Tod.

"Why, yes, but I don't think it would be convenient for any of us to make the trip down there, Graves," answered the Doctor amiably. "You wouldn't want to take the time, I presume, Ty?"

"Why, no, sir. That is, I would go if you thought it advisable, but it seems to me that the matter isn't of enough importance, Doctor. It would be nice to get a game with Winalona, but I don't feel that I ought to leave camp for a whole day to get it."

"Then how would it do, Doctor, if Stu Younge went?" It was Joe Graves again, politely insistent. Joe sat well forward on the bench beside Tod, letting the firelight play on his countenance and enjoying his moments of glory. "You see, sir, it was Younge's idea in the first place. No one else would have thought of it. We do need games, sir, as Mr. Tyson says, and the fellows I've talked with are pretty keen for meeting

Winalona. They've got a corking team and it would be worth while beating them. The teams—"

"Get back to Stu," whispered Tod in his ear.

Joe faltered but got a fresh hold on his subject. "What I wanted to suggest is that Stu be sent down to Winalona to see the baseball coach personally. As I said before, it's his scheme, and it would be only fair to let him put it through. And he could do it in ten minutes, probably; in about the time it would take to get the connection on the telephone."

"You flatter the telephone," remarked Mr. Gould in an audible aside, and there was a ripple of amusement. Joe was for continuing his remarks, but Tod tugged at his sleeve.

"I second that!" said Punk.

"So do I!" added Tommy Greene, doing as he had been instructed to do.

"Good scheme," agreed Tod conversationally, as though for the sole benefit of those close by. Others likewise signified approval and then Doctor Templer said: "Why, that sounds reasonable, fellows, but oughtn't we to hear from Younge before we decide? Would you be willing to accept the commission, Younge?" The Doctor looked uncertainly about the firelit circle. "I presume you're here somewhere," he added.

Stuart's hesitation was of just the right dura-

tion. Then he answered: "Yes, sir, I'd be glad to. I think that some other fellow could do it better, though."

Cries of "No! No!" from the fellows near by.

"How could he get to Lake Mirage and back, though?" asked Mr. Lassiter. "The noon boat wouldn't give him time, I fear, to attend to the business and return to South Landing before the afternoon steamer left. What is the distance to the locality from South Landing, anyway?"

"Three or four miles, I'd say," replied Mr. Pope. "What he might do, if he cared to foot it a bit, is walk over to Lakeside and get the steamer that leaves there at eight-thirty."

"He could do it by canoe quicker, sir," said Tod.

"So he could. It can't be more than a mile and a half by water. In that way he would have practically all day down there."

"Well," said the Doctor, "shall we consider that settled? You and Mr. Tyson arrange the details, Younge. I've no doubt but what you will prove an excellent ambassador. Now, Mr. Pope, wasn't there something you wanted to bring up this evening?"

"You'll have to speak for Tudor," said Tod as they went back toward the tent. "Tell Ty you want company, you know. Of course he will have to pay his own fares. So will you, I guess."

"I don't mind, but you'd better lend me a couple of dollars, Tod. Gee, I never thought I'd get to go! That was fine of Joe Graves, wasn't it? Makes me feel kind of cheap, too. You know, I've never been awfully keen on Joe, and I thought he might have noticed it, but I guess he didn't."

"Awfully decent of him, I thought," responded Tod gravely. "By the way, what about that football? Have you seen Don Lovell? I suppose there isn't time to collect the money to-night, but it might be a good idea to get it anyway. Then, in case the other business failed, you'd have something to show for your trip."

"I don't believe the other business will fail," said Stuart. "If we're willing to go down there and play—"

"Well, you hustle along over and see Ty. And put it to him strong about Tudor, old son. If you like I'll look up Lovell and see what he says about the football. If he doesn't want to advance the money I'll let you have enough. Good luck!"

Stuart returned triumphantly just before taps. "It's all right," he announced to the other inmates of Tent 6. "I'm going to paddle over to Lakeside and get the morning boat, and Tudor Nason's going with me. And Ty says he thinks the Camp will pay my expenses. Not that I care much, though. I've got a list of the dates we can play, a whole raft of them, and I'll bet one of

them will suit them. Ty says I'm to try to get them to come up here for the game, but if they don't want to do that we'll meet them on their grounds. So everything's settled fine!"

"Here," said Tod, "is four-seventy-five. Lovell let me have two and the rest is mine. He says don't pay more than four and a half for a ball. Now is that enough?"

Stuart considered. "Well, I won't have much for eats, Tod. And I really think I ought to buy Tudor's lunch, don't you? He's my guest, sort of."

"I can let you have a couple of dollars," drawled Punk.

"So can I," Joe Graves said. But Stuart shook his head over the latter offer. "You've done enough, Joe," he said gratefully.

Perhaps it was excitement that kept Stuart awake later than usual after lights were out. When one has remained for more than a month in the woods, or, at least, away from towns, the prospect of a day amongst new scenes has a certain appeal. Besides, Stuart felt anxious as to the success of his mission. He would, he reflected uncomfortably, feel such a fool if he came back to camp acknowledging failure. Of course he couldn't be blamed—

"Tod!" he broke off his musings to whisper softly.

"Yeah?" responded the other sleepily.

"What are you chuckling about?"

"Chuckling? Me?" Tod was faintly indignant. "Was I?"

"Sounded like it."

"Maybe I was dreaming, Stu." Tod rolled over. "You'd better go to sleep," he advised, "and not wake other folks up!"

And after a while Stuart did.

After a hurried breakfast Stuart and Tudor set off in a canoe for Lakeside. Tod went to the boat house with them and watched until they had disappeared around the point, waving them a last adieu. Then he did a rather surprising thing. He sat down on the edge of the float, put his hands to his sides and laughed until the tears came to his eyes. It was quite five minutes before he pulled himself together and went back up the slope. Even then his eyes still looked misty and his lips still trembled at times. "Question now before the meeting," he muttered as he approached the Office to assume his duties as one of the lamp detail, "is where do I hide out when the evening boat gets in!"

There was much discussion during the day as to the result of Stuart's visit down the lake and in the afternoon the nine went at its practice with a new vim. The prospect of crossing bats with a team of Camp Winalona's caliber was a fine incentive to effort. Tod played a little tennis with

Joe Graves after siesta and was an easy victim. Somehow the afternoon passed, the flag came down and supper hour arrived. Tod was not one of those who skimped the meal in order to be at the landing when the *Saranetta* arrived, yet, because the *Saranetta* was a few minutes late, as she not infrequently was, he got down there in plenty of time. He noted that two of the councilors had also joined the gathering; Mr. Pope and Mr. Tyson. Tod didn't try for a position of prominence on the pier. Instead, he remained rather in the background, almost if not entirely concealed by the larger bulk of Ted Connover. As the *Saranetta* drew near his gaze searched the deck for Stuart and Tudor, but not until the steamer had brushed the pier did the embassy to Winalona appear. Their appearance was hailed with a welcoming "A-ay!" and as they stepped ashore—Tod was relieved to note that Tudor carried a package which undoubtedly contained the football—questions greeted them.

"Did you date 'em up, Stu?" "Will they play us, Younge?" "What's the verdict, feller?"

Tod observed that Stuart looked somewhat embarrassed. At least, that was the word that occurred to him to describe an expression that seemed to mingle chagrin and a sort of sheepish defiance. Tudor looked gravely non-committal, but Tod could see that there was amusement in

his eyes if not on his lips. It was Mr. Pope who brought the suspense to an end.

"Well, Younge, did you have any luck?"

Stuart shook his head, his gaze searching the gathering but returning defeated to the questioner. "No, sir," said Stuart.

A murmur of disappointment arose, and Mr. Pope said: "Really! That's too bad. What did they say? What reason did they give?"

"I didn't ask them." Stuart's countenance reddened. Behind him, Tudor straightened his mouth. It had begun to tremble.

"You didn't ask them!" exclaimed Mr. Tyson incredulously. "For goodness' sake, why?"

Stuart appeared to take a deep breath. Then, with a sickly sort of smile, he replied.

"It—it's a girls' camp, sir!"

CHAPTER XVI

HONORS ARE EVEN

For a moment there was intense silence on the pier. Then some one made a strange, choking sound, and after that fellows clung to each other helplessly and howled. Mr. Pope blinked bewilderedly an instant before his features relaxed. Mr. Tyson's shoulders were already heaving. Stuart, too, laughed, but very, very feebly. It was extremely trying. He was glad when Mr. Pope wiped his eyes and somewhat brokenly asked for particulars, more glad when, attended by a hilarious guard of honor, he could proceed toward his tent. It was then that Tod revealed himself. Stuart gazed at him long and earnestly. Tod smiled.

"I see you got the football," he said pleasantly.

Stuart passed him by wordlessly. Tod's look of innocent bewilderment encountered Tudor's gaze. Tudor winked slowly, grinned and followed his fellow ambassador. The news, carried by joyous couriers, reached the farthest confines of the camp inside of two minutes, and when

Stuart and Tudor, convoyed by Mr. Pope and Mr. Tyson, proceeded on to the mess hall it was past a facetious and hilarious throng. Even when they were partaking of their delayed repast the sound of ribald laughter came to them, and Stuart winced and found his appetite had flown. He and Tudor had quite an audience now, for one after another the councilors, having heard the tidings, drifted into the hall. It was Tudor who eventually told the story, for Stuart's beginnings invariably petered out.

"When we got to South Landing," narrated Tudor, "there wasn't any bus. It doesn't meet that boat. So we made a dicker with a man who drove an old Ford to take us over to the lake and back for a dollar and a half. He wasn't very talkative, but he did say one thing that sounded queer, and I suppose we ought to have dropped to the situation then, but we didn't. Stu asked him— What was it you asked, Stu?"

"I asked him," replied Stuart dully, "if the camp was on this side of the lake, and he said—"

"No, I don't mean that. Oh, you asked him if there were many fellows at Winalona and he said, 'Sometimes there's a good many on a Saturday'! Well, we got there pretty soon and, as we didn't like to be seen driving up in that old ramshackle affair, we had him wait for us at the entrance. There was a big sign over a gate: 'Camp Winalona'; and we walked in and up a

long lane. The camp's about a quarter of a mile from the road, and we went quite a ways before we saw any one. Then we met a girl—sort of pretty, wasn't she, Stu?"

"Huh," muttered the other.

"Well, she was," laughed Tudor. "Of course we sort of wondered what she was doing there, and I suppose she wondered about us. Stu asked her—"

"Didn't," said Stuart over the rim of his milk glass. "You asked her."

"Did I? All right. I asked her if the camp was ahead, and she said it was and went on. Only when she was a little way off she called back something. I couldn't quite make it out, but it sounded like 'You better not let them see you!' "

Tudor's audience chuckled.

"So we went on walking, and after a bit there was a sort of a lawn and a big log cabin beyond it under some trees, and on the other side, right close by, a lot of girls dressed like the one we'd met, in middy suits, you know, were doing things. There was a basket-ball game going on and some others were playing tennis. I guess there must have been fifty girls in sight, and Stu and I stopped short. 'Gee,' he said, 'this can't be right! We made a wrong turn somewhere!' Well, we were standing there trying to decide what we'd do when one of the councilors—counciloresses—what do they call them?"

"Councilors, I think," said Mr. Gould.

"Do they? Well, one of them saw us and came hot-footing it across the grass. I was for ducking right then, but Stu stuck. 'What are you doing here?' asked the lady. 'Don't you know that visitors aren't allowed except on Saturdays?' 'I don't know a thing about it,' said Stu, awfully peevish. 'What I want to know, though, is if this is Camp Winalona.' 'It is,' said the councilor-ess—councilor, I mean. 'And,' said Stu, 'is it a camp for just girls?' 'It is,' said the lady. I suppose she thought we wanted to join! 'Thank you, ma'am,' said Stu. *'Good night!'* And we turned around and departed hence, hurriedly but with much dignity!"

Even Stu managed to grin during the laughter that succeeded Tudor's climax. Mr. Pope said finally: "But what I don't understand, Younge, is how you made the mistake in the first place. What led you to believe Winalona was a boys' camp?"

Stuart started to speak, stopped and choked over a morsel of cake. Mr. Buckley came to his support. "Why shouldn't he, Jim? Hang it, you can't blame Younge when not one of us knew any better! I never heard of the silly place!"

"Well," said Jim Pope, chuckling, "we don't get our ball game, but we've had a corking good laugh! It wasn't your fault, Younge. It was

mighty decent of you to undertake the business, and we're all greatly obliged to you."

"Right," agreed Ty. "And let me know what your expenses were, old fellow."

But Stuart shook his head stubbornly. "No, sir, I'm not going to let you."

"Well, but there's no reason why you should pay for the trip, Younge. You went on camp business, and I know that the Chief won't want you stuck for the fare and so forth."

Stuart looked across at Ty steadily and confidently. "That's quite all right, sir," he replied. "*I* won't have to pay!"

"Then," began Ty, "who the dickens—" But a flicker of amusement on Tudor's face brought him to a halt. "H'm," he said. "I see. Well, just so you don't get stung." But of course he didn't see, and he looked curiously at Stuart and Tudor alternately until the group broke up. Afterwards, walking down the path with Jim Pope, he said musingly: "Guess there's a part of this we aren't in on, Jim."

Mr. Pope chuckled. "Evidently, Ty. Some one put up a game on Younge. That's why he's so sore. I don't know who it was, but I have a suspicion."

"Whom do you think?"

"I'll wait until I'm a bit more certain. A while ago one of the fellows came and asked me to put

those two, Younge and Nason, on camp-fire detail together, and I did it. Looked as if something amusing might result, you know, and in camp anything that makes for harmless fun is worth going after. But nothing happened that I could see, and I watched pretty closely. My explanation is that this chap fell down on that attempt and so tried again. I may be wrong, but I don't think so. Anyway, we'll learn eventually. Everything leaks out sooner or later, you know."

"Well, whoever worked it—if it really was a hoax—did a good job! Only—" and Ty laughed softly—"what's going to happen to him when they catch him?"

Jim Pope laughed too.

Meanwhile Stuart and Tudor had set forth in quest of Tod. They found him without difficulty. He was seated quite alone on the porch of the recreation hall. He held one knee in clasped hands and was gazing thoughtfully up at a half moon riding above the tree tops. He was whistling softly and plaintively. A path of light from an unshuttered window fell on the boards behind him. Stuart sniffed as he recognized his quarry.

"Looks mighty innocent, doesn't he?" he grumbled. "We'll have to get him away from there, Tudor."

"Oh, hello," greeted Tod. "Have a good supper, you chaps?"

"First rate," replied Stuart politely. "Want to take a walk down to the tent?"

"No-o, I don't think so. I like to sit here and look at the moon."

"Well, we've got something to tell you," pursued Stuart. "Something that happened to-day. Something awfully funny."

"Fine! I'd like to hear it. Sit down here."

"Some one might be listening," answered Stuart. "Let's go down to the tent. It's almost time for camp-fire, anyway."

"Oh, not for half an hour yet, I'd say. Don't be so restless, old chap. I should think you'd be tired after that long trip. And then the—the disappointment, too!"

"Tod," said Stuart earnestly, "you're a double-crossing yellow pup! You're a—a—"

"But, look here, Stu! What's the idea? Did I send you down there? Really, old thing, I don't understand—"

"I don't say you sent me. But you started the whole business, you—you ape! You said that Winalona had a ball team—"

"Oh, no, I didn't, Stu!" interrupted Tod firmly. "You merely jumped to conclusions. What I said—"

"Listen to me. You told me—"

"I told you that Winalona was having a big year. You said you'd never heard of the place.

I said that as a baseball player you should know about it. One word led to another, but I never once told you that Winalona was a boys' camp or that it had a baseball team. You misunderstood me, Stu. Was that my fault?"

"That's all fine enough," spluttered Stuart, "but whether you said it or not, you wanted me to think it. A lie's a lie—"

"Whether it's spoken or written, eh?"

"Huh?"

"But you shouldn't accuse me of lying, Stu. Really, you shouldn't. In the first place, I didn't, and the next place such an unkind accusation doesn't come well from you, old son."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Stuart less excitedly.

Tod shrugged and smiled back in the moonlight. "Think it over, dearie," he advised. Stuart shot a questioning glance at Tudor. There was an instant's silence. Then Stuart said rather lamely: "I don't know what you're talking about, but, anyway, it's got nothing to do with to-day. You knew blamed well that Winalona was a girls' camp—"

"Still, at that," chuckled Tod, "girls play baseball nowadays, don't they? Oh, snap out of it, Stu! Of course I played it on you. You and Tudor both. I got Joe Graves to propose having you go down there. I put the plan of taking

Tudor along in your silly old head. What of it?"

"Well," stammered Stuart, momentarily taken aback by the other's candor, "well, do you think it was a decent thing to do? A joke's all right, but—but this makes a perfect fool of me! The whole camp—"

"Shucks! The camp's had a good laugh, but no one's making fun of you. Besides, it'll be all forgotten in a couple of days. Forget it, Stu."

"That's all right, but a joke's a joke—"

"Whether it's spoken or written, you mean?"

Stuart paused again. Tudor laughed. "It's no use, Stu," he said. "He's wise!"

"Oh," murmured Stuart, grinning feebly. "So that—that's why you—"

"What do you think, old dear? I've known it for weeks. I just let you and Tudor go on being happy while I looked around and found a proper place to dig a hole for you. I tried to even things up before once, but the scheme flopped. Glad it did. I like this joke better. Oh, very *much* better! Well, what do you say? Still on the high-horse, Stu, or—"

"You confounded old fox!" said Stuart in a tone of unwilling admiration. "Oh, well, we'll call it even, I guess. Gee, I didn't suppose you were on to that letter business. How did you find out?"

"Pillsbury told me."

"You mean you asked him? Gosh, we never thought you'd do that!"

"Does Pillsbury know?" asked Tudor uneasily.

"No, I let him think—well, I don't know what he did think! That I was a nut, probably."

"Well, it was a lot of fun at the time," sighed Stuart. "Remember Tod's expression when he was reading it, Tudor?"

"You didn't see me read it!"

"Didn't we? I'll say we did! We were watching through the window over there. It was great!"

"I guess it was," agreed Tod grimly. "I don't see why I didn't suspect the truth, though. Gee, I thought The Pill was crazy!"

"Look here," said Tudor, "you said something a minute ago about trying a game on us that didn't come off. What was that?"

"Bet you anything that was the time he was going around grinning like the cat that ate the canary," said Stuart. "Remember?"

"You've got the date, all right," answered Tod, "but you'll never learn the rest of it. That, Stu, was one of the bitterest disappointments of a long and blameless life. I can't speak of it without tears."

"Must have been good," muttered Tudor. "Let's have it, Tod."

"Never! Well, maybe some day years hence I'll confess. But now the—the wound is too fresh."

"You're an idiot," laughed Stuart. "Let's ramble. I want to stop at the tent a minute."

The story of the mission to Camp Winalona was retold that evening about the camp-fire to a circle of eager listeners. This time Stuart was the historian, and, having recovered from his peeve, he did a very good job, even, it is suspected, ornamenting the tale a trifle in the telling. The audience was appreciative and more than once Stuart had to wait until the laughter had subsided before continuing. Doctor Templer seemed to enjoy the story as much as any one; and it was the Doctor who propounded an embarrassing question to the narrator at the conclusion.

"May I ask, Younge, where you heard about this Winalona place?"

"Why, I—" Stuart performed some desperate thinking in his effort to conceal the fact that he had been deliberately hoaxed—"I think some one spoke of it, sir." He furrowed his brows deeply, but the ruse didn't register with the Doctor, since the fire had been neglected during the narrative and such details were lost in the shadows.

"H'm," said the Chief. "Who was it that told you?"

Poor Stuart hemmed and hawed, and then Don

Lovell came to his rescue. "It was Tod Hale, sir. Stu doesn't want to say. He told me that Hale had—"

"The question wasn't asked of you, Lovell," interrupted Mr. Pope.

"Have I stumbled on a state secret?" asked the Doctor.

"No, sir," replied Stuart. "I believe it was Tod, Tod Hale, sir."

"And where did you get your information, Hale?"

"Why, I just happened to run across an advertisement in a magazine the other day, sir. It said that this camp was on Lake Mirage, and I knew that Lake Mirage was near by. Afterwards I happened to mention it to Stu—to Stuart."

"I see," said the Doctor dryly, while sounds suspiciously like chuckles were heard. "And this advertisement didn't 'happen' to mention that the camp was—ah—conducted for girls?"

"It might have, Doctor. I read it hurriedly. A lot of fellows were talking just then. We were up at the recreation hall, sir, and Don Lovell was suggesting that some of us chip in and buy a football so that we could get in some practice before we went back to school. I just hap—I picked the magazine off the table and wasn't really thinking of reading it."

The latter part of Tod's elaborate explanation was somewhat smothered by laughter. The Doctor, however, managed to keep his face straight. "As a matter of fact, Hale," he pursued when he could make himself heard, "you knew that Winalona was a girls' camp, but you—ah—you neglected to mention the fact to Younge. Isn't that about it?"

"Well, sir," replied Tod thoughtfully, "it seems that I must have known it; that is, if the advertisement said so."

"They usually do, Hale."

"Yes, sir, I know they do. Oh, I just remembered! I've got it here somewhere." He pulled a crumpled piece of paper from a pocket, held it to the insufficient light, shook his head and stepped around to the Doctor with it. "I can't see what it says," he explained.

"I fancy you don't want to!" That produced more chuckles, and the Doctor detached a flashlight from his belt and illumined the fragment. "H'm," he said. "Yes, the information appears to be quite complete, Hale. 'Camp Winalona for Girls'; h'm; 'Select membership. Riding, golf, land and water sports.' I don't see any mention of baseball, Hale."

"I don't believe they play it, sir," said Tod cheerfully.

"You didn't tell Younge that they did play it, then? That the Winalona baseball nine held an unbroken record and so on?"

"Oh, no, sir! You see, I didn't know anything about the camp, really."

"Just what did you tell him, then?"

"Well," responded Tod reflectively, "I said that Winalona was having another big season—"

"And how did you know that?"

"It says so there." Tod indicated the advertisement.

"What? 'Begins its eighth successful season.' Well, yes, it does in a way. Although I'm not certain that 'successful' and 'big' are interchangeable, Hale."

"That was the—the impression I got, sir."

"All right. But I still don't see—"

"I think it was a kind of misunderstanding, sir. Stuart had baseball in his mind, and when I said something about a team that hadn't been beaten—"

"What team was that?"

"Oh, just any team, sir."

"Not Camp Winalona, though?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

But the audience couldn't stand any more, and further dialogue was cut short by howls of glee. The Doctor rewarded Tod with a look that was perhaps meant to be disapproving but that only

succeeded in being quizzical, handed him back the piece of paper and snapped out his light. Tod retired to the enthusiastic embraces of his friends and the incident was closed. But it wasn't forgotten. Nor, perhaps after all, was it closed, since Joe Graves had quite a lot to say to Tod after they returned to Tent 6. Joe took the position that Tod had deceived him into proposing that Stuart make the Winalona trip, and he was extremely nasty about it until Punk wearied of his scolding and told him to shut up. The fact that Joe had likewise been a victim of Tod's conspiracy almost reconciled Stuart to the joshing he had received.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PILL ASPIRES

Coach Tyson found a substitute for the Winalona game in a contest with a scratch team from East Harbor, across the lake. Gene Littleton pitched five of the six innings and Graystone won by the close score of 7 to 5. Two days later the camp nine received its second drubbing when Avon came up and took most kindly to The Pill's offerings. The Pill was plainly off his game that afternoon, and, after the visitors had secured a fine six-run lead in the second inning, so, too, were the fielders. From a Graystone viewpoint that contest was a sorry affair, for when the dust had blown away Avon was credited with seventeen perfectly good tallies and the home aggregation had four!

Tod was spared the pain of witnessing the encounter, for it took place on the day that Elbow Bay journeyed up the lake to engage the Tennis Team again. In the morning Tod was successful against his singles opponent, who was Jamison this time, and Tudor fell victim to the far better

playing of Chardon. Again the two teams halved the forenoon program, but the afternoon gave the palm to the invaders. Tod and Tudor had drawn Carlson and Jamison as opponents, and neither of the former doubted their ability to win the match in the straight sets. But Tod had a somewhat off-day, Tudor's playing was affected by his partner's and the best they could do was pick up the second set, 6-4, after losing the first, and finally go down to defeat in the third, 8-6. Since Gordon Pettie was playing baseball, as, too, was Lou Burnham, Graves paired with a fellow named Cosgrove and offered scant resistance to Chardon and Lamport in the other engagement. So that at half-past four Elbow Bay departed in triumph and Graystone established a record of two defeats in one day.

Tod felt decidedly sympathetic toward Pillsbury when he encountered him before supper. They had both failed, both fallen before the enemy. The Pill looked decidedly crestfallen, Tod thought; and so he offered consolation. Not brazen sympathy, of course; no fellow who has been batted out of the box or sent his drives out of court wants that; but just a chance to talk it over and get the smart out of the wound. Ever since they had served on shore detail together the two had been casually friendly. Once or twice there had been chats of some length, but The Pill

had sedulously refrained from making capital of that enforced intimacy, and Tod had appreciated it. He had grown to view The Pill's homely countenance without distaste; had become used to it; had, indeed, accepted the other much as he did a score of fellows with whom he was friendly but not intimate. Now he perched himself on the edge of the porch outside the recreation hall and invited confidences.

"They'll be tossing you and me in the lake, I guess," he said with a grin. "I was awful to-day at tennis. Couldn't hit a ball clean to save my life. Elbow Bay simply walked off with the affair."

Pillsbury nodded soberly. "It happens that way sometimes. Like to-day. I couldn't make a ball break right, as hard as I tried. Of course, those fellows were regular hitters, and I guess we'd have got licked anyhow, even if I'd been going good. But it's funny, just the same. How you'll be all right one time and perfectly rotten another, I mean. What's the reason you guess?"

"I don't try to guess," answered Tod cheerfully. "And you'd better not either. It—it's just so, Pillsbury."

The other nodded. Then, "Why don't you call me 'Pill'?" he asked. "Most fellows do."

"Why, I—well, I—I don't know!" said Tod, taken aback. "I suppose 'Pill' is a—a natural

abbreviation for your name, but it doesn't sound —I mean—"

"Oh, that's all right. I guess maybe I am a pill in some ways. Well, you know; kind of funny looking and loose-jointed and all. And I ain't—haven't, I mean—haven't been around with fellows much; fellows like there are here, you know. I came pretty near beating it after I got here. I got guyed a good deal and I didn't know how to take it. I know now that fellows didn't mean a lot of it, but I got kind of upset then." There was a pause. Tod tried to think of the right thing to say, but before he succeeded The Pill went on. "Guess if it hadn't been for you I'd have gone on back."

"Me!" exclaimed Tod. "Why, how—why—"

"Well, maybe it sounds cheeky, kind of, Hale, but I got a—a—I sort of admired you, the way you looked and acted and all, and I said maybe if I stayed I'd get to know you and you'd tell me things."

"What sort of things?" asked Tod weakly.

"Oh, about what to do in a place like this," replied The Pill. "And about how to behave and all that. I ain't—haven't got very good manners, you see. Like at the table. And I'm kind of tongue-tied when folks are about. I'm just what you fellows call a 'hick,' a 'small-towner.' You've got to get around, haven't you, if you're going to learn things? Well, I'm glad I didn't

go away, because I've had a mighty good time. Best summer I ever put in. Say, I didn't tell you, did I? About the pictures in that book—that pamphlet you gave me. Say, dad was plumb flabbergasted. You ought to read what he wrote. Only," added The Pill with a rueful chuckle, "I don't know as you could. Dad don't write very plain!"

"I'd like to try," said Tod earnestly. "Look here, I'm sorry I didn't know before, Pillsbury. About you wanting—about telling you things, I mean. I don't know that I could have, but I'd have been glad to try. And here it is almost the end of camp!"

"Oh, that's all right," answered the other untroubledly. "It didn't take me long to see that you wouldn't have much use for a queer like me; not with all the friends you had here, you know. But I picked up a lot of things just the same. Fellows at the table deviled me a good deal and I guess I've got a lot better manners than when I came. Other things, too," he added cheerfully if vaguely.

"Well, I wish— Look here, if there's anything I can do, any way I can help—"

"There's one thing I'd like to ask you about," said The Pill. "I've made up my mind that I'm going to a school, one of these preparatory schools. Maybe next fall; I mean a year from now. I guess I couldn't get ready before that.

Well, now, would you think it would be all right if I was to go to this place where you and Younge go? Would they kid me a lot? You see, I don't know much about that kind of school, except what I've read and what I've heard fellows here tell. I wouldn't want to go to one of them if I'd be—be out of place. I used to think all you needed was plenty of money and some fancy clothes, but I guess you've got to have more'n that to fit in at one of those schools. If it was just money it would be all right, because Dad's fixed about as well as any one in Tappen, but I guess that ain't all, eh?"

"No, lots of poor chaps go to prep schools," replied Tod, frowning. "And most fellows don't go in for fancy clothes. But—well, you'd find that sort of a school different from—from the schools you know. Seems to me, Pillsbury, a good high school is what you want. Isn't there one in your town?"

"Not yet, but there's one in the next town, and that isn't far. Why didn't you go to a high school instead of Nostrand, Hale?"

"Huh? Why—" Tod was glad to hear the bugle, for the question was rather a facer. He jumped up quickly. "We'll have another talk, Pillsbury," he said hurriedly. "I'll think it over. See you later."

After supper he took Stuart aside and announced astonishingly and perturbedly: "What

do you think? Pillsbury wants to come to Nostrand!"

"Does he? Well, I said the lad had sense." Stuart's reaction to the startling announcement was not at all what the other had expected.

"But—but, good golly, Stu! Imagine it!"

"I do. But tell me more. How'd you get it? He tell you?"

"Yes. We got to talking—" Tod paused and debated a moment. Then he rendered to the other the gist of his conversation with The Pill. He displayed embarrassment once or twice, and would have relapsed into stubborn silence if Stuart had grinned too broadly. But the latter remained quite serious, and Tod went through with it, ending with: "I didn't know what to say when he sprang that! You don't want to hurt a fellow's feelings; tell him that he isn't the right sort for prep school. But I've got to tell him something!"

"I don't see what all the agitation's about," answered Stuart. "He doesn't expect you to introduce him at school, I fancy. Let him come to Nostrand. Why not? Look here, Tod, we've got fellows there right now just as—well, scraggly as The Pill. And some of them haven't got half his sense. Remember a queer-looking guy named—"

"That's not it! I don't say that Pillsbury would be any funnier than two or three others

I've seen at school. But, hang it, Stu, it wouldn't be fair to him to let him do such a silly thing! He wouldn't be happy there, wouldn't get on with the bunch. They'd make fun of him—"

"Would they? Do you see fellows making fun of the chaps on the Nine? Shucks, The Pill could have two more inches on his nose and thirty-eleven more freckles on his face, and wear funnier clothes than he did on the boat that day, and every time he struck out a man the bunch would yell for him! Why, hang it, Tod, if he was half as good year after next as he ought to be I wouldn't be surprised if it came to be the fashion to have freckles and fall over your own feet! Boy, you can't make fun of a fellow who has the goods!"

Tod blinked. "Yes, he can pitch, can't he?" he asked finally. "I hadn't thought of that, Stu. I suppose that would make a difference."

"Besides, it isn't likely that The Pill is going to stand still meanwhile. What I mean is, he's going to be a heap more—more presentable a year from now. He's got brains and he'll learn a lot of things here this summer. He told you he had. And he'll go on noticing and changing. Maybe he won't be able to change his looks much, though you can't tell about that, but he'll be a different Pill, mark my words, son."

"Well—"

"Here's another thing, you poor toad. You've

got a mighty sweet chance of copping a promising pitcher, and instead of trying to find an excuse to keep him away from Nostrand you'd ought to be doing everything you can to persuade him to come. See that?"

"Oh, hang it, Stu, being able to pitch against the teams around here doesn't mean very much. Lots of fellows at school can pitch as well as Pillsbury and never get a show with the Nine."

"Who told you that? Run away and sell your papers! The Pill's *good*. No one has ever shown him a thing about curving a ball or fielding his position or even holding a bat until he came here. Well, what do you think a good school coach could do with him?"

"He got hit a lot to-day, didn't he?"

"I'll say he did! But what's that amount to? Ever see a good pitcher who didn't have his off-days? Look at Lee Johnson in the Fisk game last spring! Gosh, he couldn't even hit the batter! Boy, if 'Baldy' Dexter ever gets his hands on Pillsbury—well, Nostrand will have a mighty good pitcher!"

"Then I'll tell him it's all right," said Tod with very evident relief. "Of course he's going to have his troubles—"

"Every fellow does," said Stuart, with a shrug. "And I guess they're good for him. Tell you what, Tod, you get The Pill over here some time— No, we'll take him out in the canoe to-

morrow and talk to him. That is, you can talk and I'll be your 'yes-man.' You give him the dope straight and let him decide for himself. What gets me is that Tudor hasn't tried to pinch him for that silly school he goes to!"

"Perhaps," answered Tod uneasily, "you'd better ask him, Stu. He might think that I wanted to get him out in the lake and drown him!"

"I will not. Do your own dirty work. Besides—" and Stuart smiled maliciously—"from what you've just told me I gather that The Pill would die happy at your hands, Tod!"

The program was duly carried out. With Pillsbury in the center the red canoe floated down along the shore for the better part of an hour the next forenoon while Tod, assisted and sometimes prompted by Stuart, explained Nostrand School to an eager listener. Pillsbury, was, it turned out, not quite seventeen. If he entered a year from that fall he should at least make the upper middle class, but to do that would, as Tod said dubiously, mean an awful lot of studying. "Think he could pass, Stu?" Tod asked. Stuart nodded. "Could if he wanted to bad enough, I guess. You'd have to be tutored a bit, Pillsbury; no doubt about that; but, as I say, if you make up your mind to it you can do it. I'll see that you get a copy of the catalogue as soon as I get back. That will tell you what's required of an

upper middler. You find some one where you live who can teach the subjects, show him what you're up against and then buckle down to it. And don't spend all your time on study, either. Keep up your pitching, son, because, just between us three, that's going to help you a heap when you get there!"

"I'll fix it up so's they'll let me in," said The Pill determinedly. "I ain't afraid of studying. Nor any other kind of work. I've generally had to work pretty hard, until here lately. I guess Dad will be pretty much surprised when I tell him." The Pill smiled reflectively.

"He won't object, you think?" asked Tod.

The Pill shook his head. "No, he'll be pleased to hear it. You see, he's always wanted me to be—to be what he calls a gentleman."

"Guess you're that now," said Stuart quickly. "You mean he wants you to make something of yourself, I suppose."

"I guess so. He told me once he didn't think I'd ever win any prizes in a beauty contest, but if I studied and learned I might get to be one of the judges!" He smiled slowly. "Said it was better to be the feller who gives out the prizes than the one who gets 'em!"

"Your dad has a heap of sense himself!" laughed Stuart.

"Yes," The Pill assented soberly, "he's pretty sound, Dad is. He hasn't had much education,

but he's taught himself a lot, I guess. Says he wants me to start where he leaves off. No, he won't make any objections to me going to Nostrand School. He'll be mighty well pleased, I expect. Ma would, too, if she was alive. Ma was like Dad that way; always said I was to grow up to be something important. President, she said, but of course she was just fooling. That's why she gave me that name. She said folks were influenced by their names."

"What name's that?" asked Stuart.

"My first name; Armitage. It—it's sort of fancy, ain't it? Ma said there was a king by that name, but I've never been able to find out about him. Nearest thing to a king was a general, and his name wasn't exactly Armitage; it was Arminius. He was a Cherusci, the history says, but it don't say what that was. Anyway, I guess he wasn't the feller Ma had in mind. Did you ever hear of a king called Armitage?"

Neither Stuart nor Tod recalled such a monarch. Stuart said: "The only Armitage I recall was a right-hander who pitched for the Roman team against the Egyptians on the Nile. That was in the old days, about 50 B. C., when a third strike was out if caught on the bounce. Ptolemæus was the only guy who could hit Armitage and he was thrown out stealing home. The final score was—"

But Tod splashed him into incoherence, and so the final score was never learned.

Of course you can't practically adopt a fellow, as Tod and Stuart had done in behalf of their school, without feeling more or less responsible for him or without holding intercourse with him, and after that morning The Pill became a sort of ex-officio member of the coterie. Not that The Pill inflicted his society on the other three very often or could have been accused of presuming when he did, but now and then, eager for enlightenment on some subject having to do with Nostrand School or his expectations, he sought out Tod or Stuart—the latter less frequently—and presented his problem. Gradually it became a natural proceeding for them to pick him up after supper and amble with him down the slope until his path and theirs diverged. Or sometimes he went all the way to Tent 6 and sat there to await the sounding of assembly. They gave him much excellent advice on a variety of subjects, Tod especially feeling by now a distinct sense of responsibility, and The Pill listened closely and avidly and was, I think, extremely uplifted and happy.

Tent 6 won the Camp Trophy for the second time of the season about then and its occupants became very "chesty" and did much crowing. Indirectly that coveted honor led to a surprising series of adventures.

CHAPTER XVIII

TENT 6 CELEBRATES

The award of the Camp Trophy carried with it certain privileges which, if slight, were nevertheless prized by the occupants of the lucky tent. One such privilege was known as "picnic leave." It permitted those who had won the trophy to absent themselves from camp on one day from siesta to taps and to obtain from the kitchen rations for the evening meal. They could take themselves anywhere within reasonable distance of the camp, but the place most favored was The Mound, the small islet lying at the mouth of the cove and no more than a good stone throw from the landing. The Mound was scarcely larger than an average back-yard, or possibly two of them. It was mostly ledge, although there were a number of trees on it, principally pine, and the years had laid a thin layer of soil over the rock. In but one place did the shore afford anything in the nature of a beach, a brief stretch of pebbles between the bowlders that rimmed the rest of the little island. The Mound was not camp property, but its owner had long since accorded to Doctor

Templer its use by the fellows. On the highest point had been built a rather elaborate fireplace and chimney of close-fitting stones. Here there was an iron grill for broiling, a table and rustic benches for the use of picnickers. Pine needles carpeted the earth, low-hanging branches hemmed it about and it was indeed a very jolly sort of place for an outdoor party. That, however, it did not meet the full approval of all who piled over there with steaks to be cooked and potatoes to be roasted was evident, for all about were the remains of other fires in all sorts of amateur fireplaces. Many of the picnickers found pleasure in piling stones after ideas of their own, others probably had in mind the consumption of less fuel than was required by the big chimney-place; a not unnatural consideration when the wood had to be lugged down from the shed behind the kitchen and ferried across.

Tent 6 decided on the first available date for their alfresco affair, which was Monday. The weather had been acting none too well of late, with cold northerly and north-westerly winds, and every succeeding day seemed to hint more plainly of autumn. Of the five fellows, though, only four could take advantage of the privilege, for the camp was busy rehearsing for the annual minstrel entertainment which was to terminate

Visitors' Day, and Punk Wallace was one of the stars of the show. Also, since Stuart's services were required on the ball field during a portion of the afternoon, it was nearly five when the party made their last trip across to The Mound. The equivalent of three wheelbarrows of cord-wood, transported by boat, lay piled beside the hearth, edibles were on the table and the two canoes were pulled up on the tiny beach. The quartette were still in their bathing suits, and, although the afternoon was chill in spite of the waning sunlight, they rewarded themselves for their labors by going into the water again. When they finally emerged they realized that the fire should have been started beforehand, but it didn't take long to get it going, and when it was they dried and warmed themselves in front of it, leisurely returning to camp costume.

Tommy Greene had been nominated cook, and to Tommy fell the task of broiling the eight small steaks, of frying cold potatoes in bacon fat, of boiling many ears of sweet corn and of making the "coffee" which wasn't really coffee but looked like it, tasted somewhat like it and, at least, had the virtue of being hot. Stuart toasted bread by means of a long stick. Toast would not seem to be a great luxury, but making it for seventy or so persons is no small task and in consequence it was seldom provided by Pop as a breakfast

feature. As much interest was displayed in that toast as in the steaks!

On the whole, considering that he was a bit out of practice, as he took pains to remind the others, and that he was the recipient of much advice, not a little of it entirely flippant, Tommy didn't do so badly as a chef. Perhaps the fried potatoes were a trifle greasy and maybe one or two of the steaks would have been the better for a longer stay over the coals, but no one grumbled. And, anyhow, it wasn't Tommy's fault that the corn was decidedly tough. Nor that Stuart had burned the toast. Tommy, who, unlike most cooks, had cultivated a tremendous appetite in the course of his duties, enthusiastically offered to eat all the corn that the others found inedible, and was patently disappointed when he got no more than his planned apportionment. For dessert there were bananas, apples, cookies and candy; the latter not supplied by the camp but purchased with private funds. They had smiled appreciatively when the bugle had blown colors and again when mess-call had sounded, and now they enjoyed the certainty that the red glow of their camp-fire was visible up the slope and that less fortunate fellows were envying them their freedom from camp discipline. They spent all of an hour at that supper, finishing the last fragment of candy lying at ease on the sweet-smelling

pine needles with the warmth of the crackling fire playing over them. That warmth was appreciated, for the breeze had freshened and held a very perceptible chill.

Replete, they were in no mood for sustained conversation for some time. Overhead the upper branches of the trees soughed, around them the water lapped the rocks, from the direction of camp came an occasional shout or a note of laughter; once, very faintly, the wail of a mouth-organ. At intervals some one, usually Joe Graves, tossed another log on the fire. Once Tod, prompted by conscience, made a start at tidying up, but he desisted without a protest when Stuart seized him by an ankle and pulled him back to repose. Gradually single words and brief phrases grew into talk. Joe Graves was reminded of another camping experience and, since no one had energy enough to stop him, told it at length and wordily. By the time he had finished Tod, for one, had forgotten the beginning, and, awaiting a dénouement which didn't come, was surprised when Stuart began on an experience of his. He wondered sleepily, first, how Stuart had guessed that Joe's story was finished, and, second, how Stuart, who was as ignorant of camping as he was, had obtained material for the yarn he had begun.

But, as he might have known, Stuart's story

was out-and-out invention, soon recognized by Tod as a parody on the narrative Joe had told. Stuart lay with his head on his crossed arms, one rubber-soled sneaker in air, and fabricated without hesitation. It had happened in the Adirondacks. There had been Stuart, his father, his Uncle Alfred and two guides, the latter named respectively Andrew and Joab. Tod rather lost the first part of the story in admiration of his chum's inventiveness, but the climax seized on his attention. "It was a night a good deal like this," Stuart went on steadily and easily, "though maybe a bit colder. You could hear the wind scooting around in the tree-tops and whistling down the canyon. It didn't bother us much, because we'd made camp under an overhanging ledge that shut us off from the worst of it. The guides had a rousing big fire and we were sitting there after a supper of trout and bear steak—"

"Bear steak?" asked Joe doubtfully.

"Yes, and if you've never eaten a nice bear steak you've got something coming to you, boy! We had venison, too, but no one touched that. You wouldn't if you could get bear. I guess it was pretty close to ten o'clock; it might have been later; I had sort of dozed off, you see, being mighty sleepy after an all-day journey like that. Anyway, it was Joab who gave the alarm.

'Folks,' said he, sort of sniffing up the canyon, 'somethin' tells me we're in for trouble.' 'Why, what do you mean, Joab?' asked my father. 'Mountain lions,' said Joab softly. 'You get the smell of 'em, Andrew?' Well, Andrew wasn't sure for a minute. You see, he was considerably younger than Joab; not more than, maybe, fifty-five or sixty."

"For gosh' sake, how old was the other guy?" exclaimed Tommy. "Other guide, I mean."

"Joab must have been more than seventy; yes, considerably more. I know he told me he'd been guiding for sixty-odd years. Well—"

"Mean to say you can smell mountain lions?" asked Joe.

"I don't mean to say I can, no, but I mean to say that Joab could; and Andrew, too, when the varmints were nearer. Joab had a wonderful sense of smell; just like a bloodhound, he was; only more intelligent. He could tell a lion from a bear or a deer or a—a skunk any time."

"Guess I could do that," gurgled Tommy. "Whoops, my dear! Who couldn't?"

"Ever smell a mountain lion?" asked Stuart coldly. "Well, maybe you wouldn't find so much difference, young feller. It's all a matter of experience, practice, Joab told me. You get to recognize one animal from another quite easily after awhile."

"But, look here, Stu," said Joe, "didn't you say this was in the Adirondacks? Well, they don't have mountain lions there!"

"They don't, eh? Say, I just wish you'd been with us that night! You'd change your tune, Joe. Why, I'll bet there are mountain lions right here in this state! Oh, not many, of course, but some. Maybe they'd call them catamounts here; just as, away down in the Southwest, they call them pumas."

"On account of smelling like a skunk?" asked Tommy brightly.

"I suppose so," Stuart said. "Well, where was I? Oh, yes! So Andrew smelled them too after a minute and he reached for his gun, and so did the rest of us. Of course there wasn't anything to be afraid of in just one lion, but Joab said there was more than one around; said the smell was very strong and there might be as many as four or five. We couldn't see anything, but after a few minutes we heard the bushes crackling. Gosh, it sounded like a regular army of—well, something! I had my trusty thirty-thirty—"

"What's a thirty-thirty?" inquired Tommy eagerly.

"Rifle, Tommy. I felt a little nervous, but I was ready for them, you can bet. Joab had tiptoed off a ways and now he came back and whis-

pered to us. 'I seen 'em,' he said. 'There's anyways ten on 'em, and they're actin' hungry.' 'Well,' said my Uncle Albert—"

"You said his name was Alfred," challenged Joe suspiciously.

"His name was Albert Alfred," replied Stuart with dignity. "Father usually called him Alfred, but I called him Albert. My aunt called him Bert. He said, 'Well, there's five of us and I guess we're a match for ten lions, but just the same, mates, we'd better not waste any ammunition!' 'Wait till you see the whites of their eyes,' said Joab, and just then there was an awful sound—"

There was!

Tommy emitted a blood-curdling shriek, echoed less ecstatically by Joe, Tod sat bolt upright, wide-eyed, and only Stuart maintained any appearance of composure. His nonchalance was, however, assumed rather than real. Overhead, struck by a sudden furious blast of wind, a dead bough had been wrenched from a tree and had come hurtling down close to the fireplace. The resultant disturbance had, perhaps, not been as loud as imagination had pictured it, but, at best, it would have been sufficiently startling. Under the influence of the suspense created by Stuart's narrative, its effect was quite devastating to nerves. Perhaps never in his life had Tommy gained his feet as quickly! But the others were

not far behind him. It was Tod who found his voice first.

"Say, we've got to get out of this, fellows! It's blowing a hurricane! Gosh, hear that, will you?"

That was a roaring wind that swayed the trees creakingly, blew sparks from the fireplace into their faces and sent their lighter chattels whirling. Against the shore suddenly-created wavelets dashed spitefully. Tod sprang across the few yards that led to the beach, stumbling over rocks and caroming off an occasional tree. The canoes, though, were well hauled up; were, besides, on the leeward side. He returned more circumspectly and helped the others pile the dishes and plates and remaining rations into the basket. "Gee, what a wind!" he laughed excitedly. "We'll have to do some paddling to get across. It's coming straight down the cove at a mile a minute." He stopped to chase a tin plate that went rolling across the ground. "That all? Come on, then, gang! Let's get going!"

At the beach, Tommy tossed the basket rattling into one of the canoes and both craft were pushed into the water. At that moment Tod remembered the bathing suits which they had hung to dry behind the fireplace. "I'll get them," he shouted. "You fellows go ahead!" Stuart called for him to let them stay there, but he was already

hurrying back. Joe and Tommy shoved off and paddled mightily to bring the canoe's bow into the wind. Then they disappeared into the darkness toward the landing. Stuart waited a minute, and then Tod's voice came: "Can't find 'em all, Stu! They've blown—"

"Come on!" called Stuart impatiently. "Let them go! We can find them to-morrow!" But he was shouting against the wind, and after a moment he realized that Tod hadn't heard, and he drew the end of the canoe a little way up on the slanting beach and started back. The fire was only a flickering pile of embers now, throwing scant light but still discharging sparks downwind, as Stuart groped his way up the slippery ascent. He didn't have to go all the way, for suddenly Tod almost collided with him in the noisy darkness.

"Got 'em all, I think," he announced triumphantly. "One of 'em had got wrapped around a tree!"

"I've been wrapped around a couple of trees," grumbled Stuart, leading the way back. A moment later he uttered an exclamation of dismay, and Tod stumbling down beside him realized why. The canoe, insecurely grounded, had gone!

CHAPTER XIX

BELLINGER'S ISLAND

But Stuart caught sight of it a second after, a darker form a few yards out. "Guess I can wade it," he said. "Here goes!"

He reached the canoe with the water still well under his arms and started back. But a harder gust of wind wrenched it from his hands. He saw it slipping away from him, tried frantically to seize it, missed it and then struck out. For several moments it was a stern race, for the canoe was past the lee of the small island now and the full force of the wind was taking it. But Stuart swam hard and got it. He tried then to swim back, pushing it before him, but made no progress, and called out to Tod.

"I can't get it back!" he shouted. "I'm going to try to get in!"

"Let it go and swim back here," counseled Tod anxiously.

There was no answer, but, under the sound of the gale Tod thought he could hear his chum's desperate efforts to pull himself into the craft.

Although a star showed here and there, the sky was dark with hurrying clouds, and Tod, peering intently, could see nothing of Stuart or canoe. Then, however, a faint hail came to him, wordless but announcing success. Many minutes passed until, at last, a black form came into view just ahead and the churning of Stuart's paddle sounded. Tod reached out and seized the bow of the craft.

"Steady," he said. "I'll pull her up."

Stuart, dripping, staggered ashore. "Gosh, I thought we were out a canoe!" he panted. "The wind's something fierce out there! I'm soaked, watch and all!"

"Let's build up the fire again," Tod said. "Some of these bathing things are fairly dry and you can change—"

"Better not take the time," interrupted Stuart. "I'm not really cold. Had to work too hard to get back here. Thought I'd never make it. Look here, old son, this wind's getting worse instead of better, and if we're going to get home we'd better start right now. Let's tip some of the water out first. If we keep close to the shore until we're around opposite the landing and then head into the cove we can make it."

"Think so?" asked Tod dubiously. "We could keep pretty comfortable here if we built the fire up."

"Oh, gosh, no, let's get back, Tod. Come on!"

They drew the canoe higher, tilted it, ran it back into the water. Tod tossed the partly-dried bathing clothes in and followed them. "All right," he announced. "Shove off!"

"Are you on the seat?" asked Stuart.

"Sure!"

"Well, get off it, you dunderhead! We've got to kneel on the bottom if we don't want to capsize. All right? Here we go. Swing her around fast, old timer!"

The canoe rode off into the unquiet water, both boys guiding it along the curving shore until the faint lights of the camp came into sight. Then they pointed the craft straight into the wind and the quite respectable seas that came piling down the cove and bent to their paddles.

But it was a losing struggle from the moment they left the protection of The Mound, and after several minutes of desperate efforts they realized it. "Have to get back," panted Stuart. "Hard aport, son!" But even while they sought to turn the canoe again toward the island the gale seemed to find a new fury. The Mound slipped past them darkly. Wind and waves struck the canoe with fresh violence. The paddles were no match for the elements.

"Missed it!" cried Tod. "Swing her around, Stu, and let's ride!"

"Nothing else for it," agreed Stuart. "Ready? Hard, son!"

Water washed over the side in gallons for a moment, but then the canoe was straight with the seas and they breathed easier. Forward it sped, swaying and rolling, the boys crouched low, digging a paddle now and then to steady it. "Maybe we can make Overlook Camp," Tod called.

"Don't believe so. We're fetching straight for West Head. That's not far from Overlook, though. Gosh, I'm getting chilly!"

"At this rate you'll soon be ashore," shouted Tod comfortingly. "I'm not so blamed warm myself. Say, what is this? A cyclone or just a hurricane?"

"Neither, I guess. Just a good fifty- or sixty-mile gale, old son. Probably blow itself out after awhile."

"Take the other side, Stu. I'm going to shift. Say, we must be doing about sixty ourselves. Good thing there aren't any traffic cops around!" About half of Tod's words never reached the stern, but Stuart made out the sense of the remarks, and Tod heard him laugh chatteringly.

After a minute he called: "Wind's shifting, I think. I'm getting it more on my right. Maybe it's trying to dry me off all around!"

"If it'll keep on shifting and blow us back to

camp," said Tod cheerfully, "I'll call it square. It has changed a bit, though. Look here! Suppose we miss West Head!"

"Next stop's Great Island," answered Stuart. "Leave no articles in the boat! Hey, what's that?"

"Where?"

"Straight ahead! No, more to your left!"

"Don't see anything! Yes, I do! It's land!"

"Dig, you loafer!"

"Hold on! We don't have to, Stu. We're making straight for it. Hang it, we're going to smash in a minute! I'll jump out and try to hold her off!"

"Better let me. I'm soaked already!"

"So am I; soaked enough, anyway. It must be West Head, eh?"

A dark mass lay in front of them, growing larger and closer every instant, and the sound of the splashing waves mingled with the whistle of the wind. "It's never the Head," shouted Stuart. "It—my gosh, Tod, it's Bellinger's!"

"Bellinger's! I'll just bet it is! Anyhow, it's land! Here goes, old son!"

"Wait! We're 'way off shore yet!"

"We are like fun!" There was a splash, the canoe rocked and Tod's voice called: "Waist deep! Dig your paddle or she'll be smashed!"

Somehow they made that landing without mis-

adventure to themselves or the canoe. There was a mass of small bowlders and crackling, punishing bushes where they went ashore, but the canoe came safely out and was pushed into a tangle of underbrush while the boys crouched against the bank and fought for breath. Overhead the trees creaked and moaned and branches snapped. Their forgotten distaste for the island returned to them and they shivered. Or perhaps their shivers were due only to their drenched bodies and the fierce chill of the wind.

"Anyhow," said Stuart after a minute, "we can't stay here. Let's find the house. I've got to get to a fire or my teeth'll chatter loose. What time do you suppose it is?"

"Can't be late," said Tod. "About eight-thirty, probably. What's the difference, anyway? There's bound to be a fire somewhere up there."

"If there isn't there's going to be," muttered the other through chilled lips. "But which way do we go? Wonder why neither of us thought to wear a flashlight!"

"Probably because it was broad daylight," answered Tod. "Anyway, they'd have been soaked by this time, I guess. All we've got to do, I suppose, is keep going up-hill. The island slopes on all sides, I think, and the house must be on the high spot. Let's try it, anyhow."

But it took only a minute or two to convince

them that they would never reach the house that way. Perhaps with daylight or the help of only a pocket torch they might have managed to force a path through the forest, but in pitch darkness it was impossible. They ran into trees, were held fast by unseen impediments, were scratched and tripped and utterly defeated. They struggled back, nursing bruises and lacerations, to the shore, somehow coming out where they had started in, as was proved when Tod fell headlong over an end of the upturned canoe.

They huddled close to the craft and conferred. The wind had been pretty straight from the north at first, had perhaps swung slightly toward the northwest later. Consequently, as Tod pointed out, they must have landed somewhere on the north side of the island; probably a trifle toward the west. As they recalled it, the landing was almost opposite Camp Overlook, on the west shore of the lake. Therefore, to reach the landing, from which, as they knew, a path led to the house, they must traverse about a quarter of the island's circumference. Presently they made the attempt, exposing themselves shiveringly once more to the blasts. But they could not advance along the edge save at an intolerable sacrifice of time and effort and comfort, and philosophically they took to the water, wading up to their knees most of the way, guiding themselves by rocks and rushes and

overhanging bushes. Twice fallen trees added to their troubles. Reaching too far out into the lake to be avoided without recourse to swimming, they had to be surmounted, and the task was not easy. Dead branches snapped under their hands, caught at their clothing, entangled them. Yet they won through with only a few more scratches and contusions, kept doggedly on and, after a long time, saw the landing dimly ahead.

Ashore again, their plight seemed for a while no better, for two attempts to find the path from the end of the pier only brought them up standing against underbrush and trees. Yet finally they found their *squishing* shoes on even, trodden ground, and went forward cautiously, as one does in black darkness, hands held before them, nerves on edge at the threat of unseen dangers. No light showed anywhere. No sound came but the ceaseless torment of the wind overhead. Where they fumbled their careful way the gale came to them only in half-hearted gusts, its force diminished by the forest. The path led gradually upward and seemed to run almost straight from landing to end, but where that end was or what awaited them there neither Tod nor Stuart knew. They spoke only once or twice, and then in lowered voices, standing close in momentary pauses that confessed their qualms.

"Funny there's no light," muttered Tod once,

striving to disguise his uneasiness with simulated resentment. "Must go to bed mighty early!"

Then, "Look!" said Stuart.

Before them, a red spark floated up, was caught in the rush of air and whisked away amidst the branches.

"That means a fire," muttered Tod. "Come on."

Gradually the form of a building took shape and then the light of a window showed dimly under a drawn shade well to the right. Tod stumbled, found himself on a board walk an inch or two above the ground. Instantly an oblong of light appeared near the window as a door was opened. The intruders had a second's vision of a tall figure in silhouette against the yellow lamplight beyond, and then they were enveloped in the white flood of a strong flashlight and a voice demanded: "Who's that? What you want?"

Startled, neither of the boys found his voice for a moment. Then Tod stammered: "We're from Camp Graystone. We've been in the water. May we get to your fire, please?"

"There's no fire here," answered the unseen man in the doorway. "This is private property and folks aren't allowed. You'll have to go away."

"No fire be hanged!" exclaimed Stuart irately. "Can't we see sparks from your chimney? What's

the matter? Think we're burglars or something, Mr. Bellinger?"

There was a moment's silence. Then, evidently far from willingly, the man answered, "Mr. Bellinger isn't here. You can come in for a few minutes, I suppose. It's against his orders, though, and you'll have to go right away again."

"All right," agreed Stuart. "All we want is to get dry."

They went forward along the dozen paces of planking, the light went out and they passed into the house. To their surprise the host was a tall negro. At least, he was not white; although they had never seen on a negro such a strange coloring. His skin was like brownish putty and had an odd dusty look. He was probably fully six feet high, but thin and with sloping shoulders. Only the lips suggested the negro. The rest of his features were sharp and the cheek-bones accentuated. His dark hair was cut short and seemed only slightly wavy. He wore rimless glasses from behind which, in the lamp-light, deep-set eyes flickered watchfully. His speech and voice might well have been those of a white. In age he might have been anywhere between thirty and forty years. Tod saw that, beside the torch in his left hand, he held a revolver in the right, and now he laid both down on a drain-board beside a small sink and pointed a long hand toward the cooking stove.

"Sit down there, young men, and I'll put some more wood in," he directed. Tod and Stuart drew chairs to the warmth and spread out chilled hands. The man opened the stove and thrust in as much wood as the fire-box would hold. The room was evidently the kitchen, but it held a couch at one end, several comfortable chairs and a table, on which the large lamp stood. It had a window and door on one side, two windows on another. A third was occupied by stove and sink and a wide cupboard. The fourth showed two doors, both closed, admitting to the rest of the house. The gale sounded far-away now, but the stove roared under its influence and the smoke-pipe glowed ruddily. The man took his position a few feet away, one hand resting on the table, and said with a suggestion of sullenness: "Mr. Bellinger doesn't allow strangers on the island. Didn't you see the sign down there?"

"How could we in the darkness? Our canoe came ashore around on the north side and we waded to the landing and found the path. You say Mr. Bellinger isn't home?"

The man shook his head. "He's gone away. He wouldn't like it if he knew I'd let you young men in here."

"Well, he won't know, will he?" asked Tod a trifle impatiently. "Anything in that pot?" He nodded toward a coffe-pot on the stove ledge. For answer the man moved forward and set the

pot over the heat. Stuart removed his steaming jacket and then his shoes, an example Tod followed. The man brought two cups and saucers from the cupboard, then spoons and a sugar-bowl, and set them on the ledge. Constantly his unquiet eyes returned to the visitors. That they were anything but welcome was evident enough, but both had resolved to remain until their clothes were dried.

"How are you going to get away again," asked the man presently, "if your canoe's around there?" He pointed a curved thumb over his shoulder.

"Hanged if I know," answered Tod cheerfully. "Isn't there a path over that way?"

"There's a path, yes, but maybe it doesn't fetch up where the canoe is."

"We'll have to do the best we can. Guess that coffee's hot from the looks of it."

The man filled the two cups. "There's only condensed milk," he muttered. "Want some?"

"I don't, thanks," said Stuart. "I'll take mine without."

It was good coffee, or else their need of it made it seem good. As he sipped, Tod's gaze traveled around the room. Evidently the house was well built, for doors and windows were cased in varnished pine, the walls were of up-and-down matched boards and there was a ceiling, the latter suggesting either a story or a half-story above.

Everything was extraordinarily clean and neat. Across a space between the farther inside door and the corner was a row of five hooks and from them depended several garments; a rubber raincoat, a mackinaw jacket, a light seater, and two hats.

"Quite a storm," observed Stuart conversationally.

"Yes," the man agreed. There was a tin clock on a shelf above the stove and its hands pointed to twenty-three minutes past nine. His gaze traveled to it meaningly.

"You don't get much of it here, though," continued Stuart, rearranging the folds of his jacket across his knees. "The trees—" He stopped abruptly. From somewhere beyond the nearer of the two inner doors came a sound of knocking.

The boys stared. The man moved a step toward the sound but stopped as abruptly as he had started. Stuart turned questioning eyes toward him. The sound went on, irregularly now: *Bang, bang-bang-bang, bang-bang-bang!* The man's voice came sharply above the sound. "That's a window banging. I ought to have fixed it." His eyes bored into Stuart's. "The wind's shaking it."

"Doesn't sound like a window to me," said Tod. "No window could make a racket like that. Maybe there's a door open."

"It's a window, I tell you!" The man's voice

became shrill, menacing. "You're dried now. Get out! I won't have you here any longer, getting me into trouble with Mr. Bellinger! Put your coats on and go, I tell you!" The noise had ceased now.

Astonished, Stuart stared an instant before he answered. Then something in the man's face warned him and he shut his lips on an angry retort. Tod was already lacing his damp shoes, and Stuart drew his own on. "All right," he said quietly, "we're going."

As though regretting his harshness, the man laughed shortly. "I'm under orders, young men. Mr. Bellinger leaves me in charge when he goes away and I can't risk my job. If he was to come back—"

"You're sure he's away?" asked Tod, quietly, slipping into his jacket. The man stared dumbly an instant. Then:

"I told you!" he said, his voice rising again. "What do you ask me that for?"

"Shut up, Tod," said Stuart quickly, in low tones.

"Just wanted to know," replied Tod carelessly. "Let's go, Stu."

The man eyed him malignantly, then shrugged his narrow shoulders. "It's good for you he isn't home," he muttered. "You'd never have got in this house. Come."

CHAPTER XX

"PUTTY-FACE"

He took up his torch, opened the door and let them past. He went ahead then, the white beams of the light spreading widely before him. Looking back, Tod saw that the house was a story and a half in height and covered more ground than he had supposed. The kitchen was only an ell. Beyond it a veranda traveled for some distance before it merged into the darkness. Dimly, a farther and larger chimney showed behind the one from which an occasional ruddy spark still spouted. As he followed Stuart along a plank walk toward an out-building he thought he heard once more the mysterious banging sound from the house, fainter now, deadened by distance and the swift rush of the gale amongst the tops of the trees. He was not sure, however; perhaps what he heard was only the tramp of feet on the walk. Their guide led them past a woodshed and ice-house, beyond which the boards stopped and a wide but overgrown path opened into the forest and ran straight toward the shore. Briars and young growth, even sapling trees, clutched and slapped at them, but the

road was distinct and traversable. The man went forward with long strides, his shoulders bent, in silence. Gradually the force of the wind increased, and unexpectedly the trees fell away and they were on the shore. Before them was a wide moonlit stretch of water, with here and there, along the opposite edge of the lake, a twinkling light. The wind still held, but its fury had abated. The man cast the rays of his torch up and down the tangled shore and presently they fell on the hull of the canoe a dozen yards away.

"Well, thanks for everything," said Stuart. "We can get to it all right, I guess."

"I'll hold the light so you can see," answered the other none too graciously.

They plunged into the tangle, scrambling over unseen roots and bowlders, and presently gained the canoe. Silently they lifted it down into the water, getting dry feet thoroughly wet again, and Tod climbed into the bow. Then Stuart followed and after a moment they were clear of the overhanging bushes and the canoe was rolling merrily as Tod dug his paddle.

"Night," called Stuart.

There was no answer save that the white radiance left them.

"Thanks for the oyster stew!" shouted Tod jeeringly.

"Shut up," admonished Stuart. "What's the

good of being cheeky? Save your breath for getting home. You'll need it!"

Tod muttered a reply, but thereafter followed Stuart's advice.

However, getting back wasn't so hard, after all. The wind blew northwest-by-north, and by putting the bow of the canoe straight into it and their muscles into the strokes of their paddles they made good progress. The sky was still littered with torn clouds, but the moon watched them most of the way back, guiding them past The Mound, into the mouth of the cove and finally to the landing. They were tired and somewhat out of breath when they lifted the canoe out, but they were home and the fact was intensely satisfying. The tents were dark, but up in the office a light still burned, and presently, as they started up the slope another light came into view. It was moving, and when, after a moment, the moon came out again from under a cloud they saw that it was a lantern and that it was coming toward them.

"Coming to look for us, I guess," murmured Tod. "Sort of late, if you ask me!"

"I wonder if they think—" Stuart began. Then a voice hailed them.

"That you, boys?"

"Yes, Mr. Pope," answered Stuart.

"Good! We were just going over to get you. Thought you must have gone to sleep over there. All right, are you?"

Tod plucked Stuart's sleeve. "They think we've been on The Mound. Let 'em, Stu. I'll tell you why later."

The rescue party consisted of Jim Pope and Syd Rhodes. The latter was saying: "I was afraid you didn't hear me telling you to stay over there. We thought we saw you trying to get across once."

"We did try it," said Stuart nonchalantly, "but we saw it wasn't any use. Did the others get wet?"

"Oh, no, they made it all right, but the storm wasn't as bad then as it got later. You fellows should have kept tabs on the weather and not got caught like that." Mr. Pope tried to sound severe as they turned back up the slope.

"Yes, sir," said Tod humbly.

"Well, you'd better turn in. Unless you want something to warm you up. Care for some hot milk?"

"No, sir, we're quite warm and dry. Good night."

"What was the idea?" asked Stuart as they made their way toward Tent 6. "Why didn't you want them to know we'd been—been shipwrecked and everything? Gosh, Tod, it's a good story!"

"Wait a minute." Tod laid a hand on the other's arm and brought him to a pause still short of the tent.

"Well," said Stuart impatiently, as Tod didn't proceed, "spill it, son."

"I don't just know," said Tod musingly. "I thought— Look here, Stu, that Arab back there—"

"Arab?"

"Well, whatever he is. You can search me. He's some sort of a negro, anyway. What do you think he is?"

"Gee, I don't know. Some kind of half-breed; Malay maybe; I never saw one, but—"

"Anyhow, whatever he is, Stu, I think Putty-Face is a liar."

"Of course he is. I'll bet old man Bellinger wouldn't care if he did know we'd been on his old island."

"Not that part of it," said Tod impatiently. "But he said Mr. Bellinger was away. Do you think he was?"

"Why—why not?"

"Didn't you hear that knocking?"

"Yes, but he said it was a window. Oh, shucks, Tod! What are you getting at? Think the old man was there all the time?"

"Yes, sir! Remember that hat of his? The one that blew off on the steamer?"

"Sure. What about it?"

"Well, it was hanging on a hook there to-night. Would Mr. Bellinger go away without his hat?"

"He might have another, you idiot!"

"I know that, but he wore that hat when he came up here, so why should he change to go away? It was a new hat and a good one. Besides, why would that Hindoo—"

"Oh, he's a Hindoo now," murmured Stuart.

"Why would he refuse to let us in? And why would he hold a pistol on us? And why was he so blamed anxious to have us go as soon as that knocking began?"

"Gosh, I don't know," breathed Stuart, impressed. "What's your idea, Tod?"

"I think that Mr. Bellinger was there all the time! I think that—that putty-faced heathen has him shut up somewhere!"

"Oh! I'll bet that's just it! He's crazy, eh? And they don't want it known! Gosh, I wouldn't have set foot on the place if I'd known that!"

"I don't believe he's crazy," said Tod.

"Not crazy! Then—well, then you certainly are, Tod! What would be the idea of shutting the old gentleman up if he wasn't batty, out of his head, maybe violent?"

"That's what I don't know," answered Tod. "That's what I'd mighty well like to know. You only had to watch that man of his to know that he was lying every time he opened his mouth. As for that noise being a window rattling—my eye, Stu, no window could make that much noise! Look here, let's you and I go back there to-morrow, quiet-like, and look around. Will you?

There's something funny about the business, and—and I intend to find out what it is!"

"And get plugged full of bullets from that revolver? Watch me do it!"

"Pshaw, he wouldn't dare shoot any one; not in broad daylight, anyway. Besides, he isn't going to see us. Come on, Stu, be a sport. What do you say?"

Stuart finally said yes, but without enthusiasm.

Fortune favored the expedition the next day, for, because Graystone was to play on the morrow its last game before the Larrimore contest, baseball practice was brief. Tod, who had gone over to the field to await his fellow adventurer's release from service, announced a change in plans. "Look here, Stu," he said in the proper tones of the conspirator, drawing the other aside, "we'd ought to have another fellow with us."

"What for?" asked Stuart.

"To create a diversion."

Stuart grinned. "All right. Who do you think's a good diversion-creator?"

Tod frowned at the other's levity. "I'd like to ask Punk, but we'd have to explain everything. And then maybe he wouldn't go. I thought perhaps Pillsbury—"

"The Pill?" Stuart chuckled. "Fancy The Pill creating anything, even a diversion! Still, it's all right by me, son. Anyway, we won't have to explain anything. Oh, Pillsbury!"

Tod said there wasn't time enough for Stuart and Pillsbury to change their togs, and so a very few minutes later they set forth in a canoe, The Pill in the middle, contented and incurious, a pitcher's glove and a baseball in his lap. The Pill had merely been invited to go canoeing and had gratefully accepted the invitation. If a certain air of mystery had appeared to surround the affair he had not let it concern him.

The afternoon was bright, and, out of the fresh breeze from the west, comfortably warm. Whitecaps showed toward the eastern shore and the surface nearer at hand was aglint with sunlight. They turned the canoe between the point and The Mound and then paddled briskly south-eastward. The landing on Bellinger's Island was well around the turn and so out of sight, and Tod's idea was to keep it so. The distance was a little more than a mile, and it was soon covered. When near the island they stopped paddling and made a close survey of the shore. No one was in sight, and after a minute they went on, dipping paddles softly, and ran the bow of the craft between two bowlders close to the end of the path they had traversed last night. The Pill's curiosity was now evidently stirring, but he still asked no questions.

"We're going ashore," Tod informed him in low tones. "You keep the canoe here; hold her by this bush; we may have to leave in a hurry."

The Pill's countenance brightened perceptibly as he nodded.

Tod and Stuart clambered ashore and then, the former in the lead, set forth on the overgrown wood path. At another time Stuart's risibilities might have got the better of discretion, for Tod's attempt to emulate the method of an Indian on the war-path was at once funny and unsuccessful. He crouched so low that he had difficulty in maintaining his balance, paused frequently with one foot in air in the manner of a startled fawn and, in brief, comported himself after the fashion of the best trackers in fiction. But Stuart was a little too excited and anxious to see the full humor of his friend's performance, and even when, his head turned and a finger on lips in a cautionary signal to his companion, Tod ran full tilt into a young birch and said *"Ugh!"* quite loudly, Stuart resisted the temptation to give way to nervous giggles.

A matter of perhaps three minutes of this anxious progress brought them in sight of the two out-buildings. Tod left the path then and made his way, not without difficulty, along the backs of the ice-house and wood-shed, pausing at last in the underbrush where a full view of the house was to be had. It was a comfortable-looking structure, with a long slope of shingled roof slanting down from a story-and-a-half height at the ridge over a wide veranda which ran along

the nearer, and, possibly, the front side. The clapboards were painted a dark reddish-brown and the roofs were stained green. A row of five windows faced the intruders, irregularly spaced and allowing room nearer one end than the other for a wide doorway. The door was closed, and so, too, were the windows. The place appeared to have been well built and at a considerable cost, but evidences of neglect were apparent. A large stone chimney arose above the gable end farthest from the kitchen ell, but no smoke appeared above it. Nor, for that matter, did the smaller brick chimney give hint of a fire. It was evident to Tod that the suspicious sounds heard last night, whatever their cause, had proceeded from that portion of the building at once farthest from the kitchen and from their present point of observation, and he was debating how best to reach that corner of the structure when Stuart tugged at his arm. Tod turned his gaze toward the ell and instantly snuggled lower behind the bushes. The man they had met last night appeared around the corner from the kitchen entrance.

He was in his shirt-sleeves and a cigarette dangled from a corner of his rather heavy lips. For an instant he paused by the steps leading to the veranda, glancing sharply about him. Then he made his way leisurely along the boards to the wood-shed. Tod and Stuart held their breaths, at least one of them wishing himself

back in the canoe as the man's steps trod the planks not a dozen yards away. They heard him lifting sticks of wood in the shed, and then he reappeared, his arms loaded with fuel. He was half singing, half humming a tune now, a dolorous, monotonous air. As soon as he had passed the corner of the ell Tod arose cautiously.

"Stay here," he whispered.

"Well, but," began Stuart protestingly.

"I'm going to send Pillsbury to the landing. I'll be back in five minutes. If that fellow is around give me a warning. Can you imitate an owl?"

"No," answered Stuart emphatically.

"Well, I guess it's just as well. He might think it was funny. Owls don't talk in the daytime. Never mind. I'll look out for myself."

He went off down the path, leaving Stuart decidedly uncomfortable. Suppose the putty-colored man came back again for more wood and saw him? He deliberated the advisability of retiring farther into the woods, but decided finally to stay where he was. If the man did discover him he'd pretend he was looking for something. Only what the dickens did one look for in such a place? Of course! Mushrooms! Stuart felt easier.

Time went very slowly, however, and it seemed nearer a quarter of an hour than five minutes

later when a crackling in the bushes heralded Tod's supposedly noiseless return. Tod looked very pleased with himself as he sank down again. "Pillsbury's going to raise a rumpus at the landing and that'll give us our chance," he announced. "Watch now and listen."

So Stuart watched and listened. Save for faint sounds from the kitchen, where, evidently, the man was preparing the evening fire in the stove, everything was extremely still. Many minutes passed. The Pill was, Stuart knew, a most inexperienced canoeist, and so it would take him some time to paddle around to the landing, but still it seemed that even a baby in arms should have done it by this time. What had probably happened, he told himself pessimistically, was that The Pill had capsized! And then, proving him quite wrong, there was a distinct noise from the end of the other path. It sounded as if some one was beating the planking with a paddle, and Stuart's instant hope was that it wasn't his paddle! The noise continued, changed to a thumping sound, and still the man in the kitchen paid no heed. Tod looked disgusted. "A fine watchman he is!" he whispered. "He ought to hear that row; I should think!"

And after another moment he must have, for he came out of the kitchen and stood staring down the path toward the landing. Probably the pier

itself was not in sight, however, for presently he walked a dozen steps farther. Even then he was not impressed, for he drew a packet of cigarettes from a pocket and prepared to light one. He didn't, however, for just then the sound became louder and more insistent and he set forth at a jogging run.

"Now!" cried Tod. He was already on his feet and in an instant he was forth in the open clearing about the house. Stuart, staring anxiously after the receding form of the man, followed, glad when the corner of the veranda obscured his view of him. Tod was facing a window which was half-way down from the top. Some sort of curtains flanked it at each side and what was beyond lay in dimness. Tod raised a cautious voice.

"Hello!" he called. "Any one in there?"

There was no answer. Stuart tingled with nervous apprehension and watched the corner of the house toward the veranda. He wondered whether the putty-colored man had taken his revolver with him a minute since. Tod raised his voice another note.

"Hello! Mr. Bellinger! Is there any one here?"

"What is it? Who are you?" asked a quiet voice from beyond the window. Tod started.

"I—I—" he stuttered. Then, recalling the

proper usage, he said: "We're friends, sir! Are you all right?"

"Very far from it," was the reply. "I'm tied with ropes so that I can't move from this bed. My man has suddenly gone crazy, I believe. I've been like this four days. I'll be greatly obliged if you will notify the police authorities at South Landing of my difficulty. He won't listen to reason, and the whole business is becoming as trying as it is ridiculous. I don't know who you are, but you had better not remain here, for Vane has shown a most violent temper on several occasions. If you will merely report the matter to the police I'm sure they will attend to it. Please don't stay!"

"Yes, sir!" answered Tod. "We'll telephone at once! Yes, Mr. Bellinger! I—" But Stuart was tugging fiercely at his arm and he didn't say the rest of it. It's doubtful if he knew what it was to have been, for excitement clutched him and his eyes were round with mingled triumph and concern as he scuttled after Stuart. They were only a few paces from the corner when Stuart stopped abruptly. Tod collided with him, stopped, too, and saw why. In front of them, his face creased in lines of fury, stood the putty-colored man. One long hand held the revolver, and as the boys stared back the weapon began slowly to rise.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PILL PITCHES STRAIGHT

THE PILL did, indeed, know but little of the gentle art of propelling a canoe, and his journey along the shore of Bellinger's Island was slow and subject to frequent interruptions. Yet he eventually reached the landing without capsizing, and, following instructions, at once proceeded to create a diversion. The pier was of iron framing and extended some twenty feet from shore. At the end was a wooden float. Under the pier bobbed a gray, blue-trimmed rowboat. The Pill worked the canoe to the float and rapped once against the boards with his paddle. Wisdom, however, showed him the inadvisability of cracking a good paddle and he looked about him. The end of an oar showed past the gunwale of the rowboat. The Pill secured the canoe by the short painter that led from a ring in the bow and disembarked. Crossing the float, he pulled the rowboat to him and took possession of one of the oars. With that he pounded lustily on the planks. Nothing happened. He ascended one of the three steps leading to the pier level and pounded some more, meanwhile watching the somber, tree-lined

path. A corner of the broad stone chimney was visible above an opening in the forest, but of the house itself he saw nothing. What he did see presently, however, was the figure of a man in dark trousers and a faded tan shirt. The man was staring at him from far along the pathway. The Pill stopped pounding, waved amiably and descended to the float. He replaced the oar in the rowboat and, a bit dubiously, awaited his fate.

The Pill entertained no misconceptions regarding his own physical beauty, yet he nevertheless decided that the strange man who didn't look quite like a negro and yet must have been a negro was quite the least attractive person he had ever met with. He would, he decided, much rather look at his own freckled countenance in a mirror than observe the individual who, obviously extremely provoked, glared down at him from the pier.

"Look here!" said the man. "Don't you see that sign? Can't you read?"

The Pill had seen the sign, of course, but he regarded it again. It announced very plainly, if in oddly formed characters: "PrivaTe! KeeP Off!"

"Well," said The Pill, "I've got a message for Mr. Bellinger, and if I 'keep off' how am I going to deliver it?"

"A message!" repeated the man shrilly, suspiciously. "Who from?" Since The Pill was at-

tired in a baseball uniform, with a leather glove dangling from his belt and a baseball protruding enormously from a hip pocket, the man's incredulity was natural.

"You Mr. Bellinger?" asked the bearer of the message.

"Mr. Bellinger's away. I'm his secretary. You can give it to me." He held out a long hand that The Pill liked even less than the countenance that leaned above it.

"I was told," replied The Pill, dutifully carrying out his instructions to engage the servant in conversation as long as possible, "to deliver the message to him personally. So maybe I'd better wait until he comes back. How long will that be?"

But the man on the pier didn't answer him. His gaze was on the red canoe. Perhaps it awakened memories. Perhaps it even aroused apprehensions. That as may have been, he turned suddenly and without answering the visitor's question ran rapidly back along the path. Rapidly indeed, for before The Pill, naturally a bit surprised, could move to a position commanding the approach to the house he was almost out of sight, a mere moving shadow amongst shadows. "That feller," muttered The Pill, "can certainly run!" He frowned and considered the whole extraordinary experience, and the more he considered the less at ease he felt. Something told

him that if the man with the queer dusty face encountered his companions there would be a certain amount of unpleasantness. He climbed the steps, proceeded along the pier undecidedly, made up his mind to a course of action and set off running along the path, if not as rapidly as the man at least as fast as caution permitted.

As he came where a view of the kitchen side of the building presented itself he stopped running and, stepping quickly aside into the shadows, observed with increasing misgivings the man emerge from the door with a revolver and proceed with cat-like tread to the left and out of sight. The Pill had, during a brief and not uneventful career, imbibed a wholesome respect for revolvers and various other types of explosive weapons, and his first impulse was to return as unobtrusively and quickly as possible to that red canoe. That he didn't do so speaks rather well for The Pill's courage. He not only did not return to the canoe, but he set forth in the opposite direction with a very fair semblance of enthusiasm. And as he ran his view enlarged, the porch came into sight, the farther end of it and, revolver in hand, the man!

At that moment two very surprised and decidedly panicky youths were watching that same revolver in unpleasant fascination. Of course, Tod told himself in that brief instant, the man wouldn't shoot them! Not in broad daylight like

this! It was absolutely absurd! And then the revolver was pointing toward them, and he wasn't at all certain about it!

"What you doing here?" demanded the man, his mouth working strangely as it formed the words. "Didn't I tell you to keep away?" His glance shot past the boys to the open window beyond and something maniacal came into it. His whole body seemed to tremble; even the hand that held the weapon wavered, but they found no comfort in that. The revolver was but four paces distant and no amount of wavering could help much! "So!" he cried, his voice taking on the same shrill tones of last evening. "So you've been spying! Good! What is the fate of spies? Eh?" He seemed to be trying to nerve himself by excitement, as though, by nature a coward, he gained courage from hysteria. His face worked continually, his teeth, strong, white and even, came and went behind his writhing lips. "Death! Death! And so it shall be!"

"Don't—don't talk piffle," said Tod, but his words were scarcely audible to himself. Something seemed to have stiffened his tongue. He heard Stuart give a long sigh. He moistened his lips and stared back at the man. "You can't get away with it," he said more steadily. "If you kill us you'll die yourself!"

"Don't talk! Pray if you like! Be quick! Death to spies and traitors! It's the Law! Al-

"Death to spies and traitors!"

ways! Death!" The hand that held the revolver seemed to stiffen. Tod's heart stood still. Then from behind him came the sound of pounding.

Bang! Bang! Bang-bang!

The man's gaze wavered for an instant toward the open window, but it came swiftly back. The heavy lips curled from the gleaming teeth. The voice ascended in a high screaming cry.

"I've got to now!"

Tod seemed to see the impulse travel down the thin arm and into the finger that curved about the trigger, and he closed his eyes.

But there came another cry, of sheer pain and fright, and when Tod looked again the man had crashed against the edge of the porch, his left hand clutching his right arm with a frantic grip, his mouth contorted with the groans that came from it. On the ground lay the revolver. Almost beside it lay a dirty-white baseball.

It was Stuart who recovered first, who gave a sort of choking cry and sprang for the weapon. He captured it and stepped swiftly back without challenge. The man was kneeling now, still holding his arm, still groaning and sobbing, a self-pitying coward. And at that moment The Pill came around the corner, very white, very round-eyed, to take in the situation.

"Got him!" he said softly. "Got him! Just where I tried for, too! Was he really going to shoot?"

Tod laughed, without a trace of amusement, however, and answered somewhat breathlessly: "I thought he had! Keep him covered, Stu!"

"Know much about those things?" asked The Pill, nodding at the revolver. Stuart silently shook his head. "Better let me have it then." Stuart yielded it with evident relief and, without altogether removing his gaze from the man, The Pill examined it quickly. "Yeah," he muttered, "loaded, all right. Now, you gray-faced baboon, what's the idea?"

The man's eyes shifted this way and that, tears of pain still welling from them. He muttered something, pulling himself to his feet with the uninjured hand. "Stay where you are," said The Pill sternly.

"You've broken my arm," wailed the man.

"I don't believe so," answered the accused one untroubledly. "It's only the muscles that hurt. Been a good thing if I had, though. Now you'd better—"

For a brief instant his eyes turned questioningly to the others and in that instant the man sprang around the corner and out of range. The Pill pursued, calling to him to halt, but the putty-faced man went on unheeding. "I'll shoot!" shouted Pillsbury, raising the weapon as he ran.

"Don't!" begged Stuart.

"Shoot to scare him," advised Tod.

They were all three pursuing, but in a half-hearted, undecided fashion, The Pill in advance, hesitating to pull the trigger. For a moment the man was out of sight beyond a slight bend of the long path. "He can't get away," said Stuart. "If he tries swimming—"

"There's a boat there," answered The Pill.

"And our canoe!" added Tod. "Come on!"

They ran faster then and the quarry came into sight again. But he was far speedier than any of them, and long before they reached the pier he was out of view once more. When, breathless, they pulled up on the narrow planking he was rowing desperately along, close to the bushes, striving to put the curve of the shore between him and the pursuers, knowing that they could never follow him through the tangled underbrush. Again The Pill raised the revolver.

"I can plug him," he cried questioningly.

"Don't," said Stuart again, and laid a hand on The Pill's arm.

"Better not," agreed Tod. "Anyhow he didn't swipe the canoe."

The Pill dropped his arm. "I didn't want to," he muttered.

Beyond the overhanging branches of a leaning maple the rowboat vanished from sight.

CHAPTER XXII

EXPLANATIONS AND A LETTER

Back at the house, their way led through a large living-room beyond the kitchen. From it two sleeping rooms opened. Of one the door was partly open. The other door was closed and locked, but the key was there. It was Tod who entered first. Mr. Bellinger's bedroom was of ample size, but sparsely furnished. There was a bureau near the open window, three chairs about a small table in the center, a metal washstand and a wooden bed. It was toward the bed that the rescue party turned their eyes.

The captive lay on his back, a blue woolen blanket covering him to well above the waist. He wore gray silk pajamas. His hands lay folded on the edge of the blanket. The sun had gone from that corner of the house long since, and in the shadowed dimness of the room his face looked oddly gray. He spoke first, without trace of excitement, as always in that strangely flat, tired voice.

"I need scarcely say, young gentlemen, that I am very glad to see you." The grave face smiled briefly. "Vane has decamped?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tod. "He ran away. We chased him, but he got into the rowboat and—and we didn't like to shoot—"

"Quite right. I've no doubt he can be found—if wanted. If you will kindly cut these bandages—" He lifted his hands, and the boys saw that they had been bound together with many yards of gauze bandage, bound in such a way that, while perfectly secured, they were allowed some play. With a muttered, awkward word of sympathy Tod severed the stuff with his knife. The others stood by in silence, their former excitement subdued by Mr. Bellinger's unconcerned acceptance of imprisonment and release.

"That feels much better." Mr. Bellinger chafed his wrists gently with thin hands. "The fellow must have known something of bandaging. And now, if you don't mind, my feet."

Tod stripped down the blanket. Again the same material had been used. The ankles were strapped side by side, but, as with the wrists, the yards of bandage had been placed so adroitly that, although it would have been impossible to loosen them save by untying their knots or severing them, they allowed the victim to move his feet to some extent. Tod's unspoken question was answered by Mr. Bellinger.

"I tried several times to release myself, but his knots were so hard that he always discov-

ered me before I had succeeded. He never left me for more than a quarter of an hour at a time save at night, and then this rope''—he pointed to a length of what seemed to be clothesline—''was attached to the bandages on my wrists so that I could not move them beyond my chest. Possibly if I were thirty years younger I might have contorted my body sufficiently to defeat him, but''—again the brief, bleak smile—''one attempt was sufficient to prove that the idea was not feasible. Thank you.'' With difficulty he lifted his legs over the edge of the bed and, The Pill springing to aid him, sat upright, a smallish, composed, still dignified person in gray silk pajamas. ''Somewhere you will see a dressing-gown— Ah, yes, that is it. Thank you.'' Stiffly, he lifted his arms to the sleeves as Stuart helped him into it. ''Now if one of you will lend me a shoulder to lean on I'll just try to get back the use of my body.

''I am,'' he continued as, with Tod's support, he walked slowly and at first uncertainly about the room, ''curious to learn how you happened to come to my assistance, but that can wait until later. On your part, you are possibly curious too. I'll try to explain how this remarkable incident occurred. My regular attendant, Horace, left me something more than two weeks ago. He had been with me both here and at my home in Philadelphia for a great many years. He is col-

ored and his folks live in Georgia. The illness of his aged mother required his return there. Under the circumstances— Thank you. I'll rest a minute now.—I couldn't refuse to let him go. I telegraphed to an employment bureau in Philadelphia and this man Vane resulted. He told me that he was a Cuban, but I have always doubted it. He said he had lived in the United States since he was a boy, had gone to school here and finally to a colored college. That I don't doubt since he appeared to be well educated; at least, along some lines. I did not like his looks from the first moment of his arrival here, but he turned out to be capable and respectful. At least, he was until some four or five days since. Then he made his ridiculous request for money."

Mr. Bellinger paused to rub an ankle. "He had evidently learned that I was reputed to be wealthy. Probably before coming here, for I doubt that appearances here, or my manner of living, would give him that idea. At all events, he asked me for a thousand dollars. He called it a loan. He wanted, he said, to complete his education. Naturally I refused him. He took the refusal badly; was sullen all that evening; muttered to himself in the kitchen. Before daylight the next morning I was awakened by him. He had a revolver in his hand and talked shrilly, emotionally; threatened to kill me if I didn't give

him the money. I told him, truthfully, that I did not have a thousand dollars here. He refused to believe me. I invited him to search. The upshot of it was that he secured me as you found me. I made what resistance was possible, but I had a wholesome fear of that revolver and the man was plainly insane. His final solution was that I was to write him a check which he was to cash through the bank in South Landing, my release to come about when the money was in his hands. I resisted that demand until the day before yesterday. Then I pretended to give in and wrote the check, but he detected my ruse. I had signed my name with a backward slant that I knew would not pass at my bankers'. He had, it seems, found my proper signature somewhere about the house. He was intensely angry and I thought for a while that he would kill me."

"Gosh!" exploded Tod. "Why—why didn't you give it to him, sir? A thousand dollars isn't an awful lot!"

Mr. Bellinger turned to Tod in faint surprise. "Why should I have done that? In what way had he deserved generosity?"

"But—but I mean," Tod stammered, "he might have killed you!"

"Oh, I see." Mr. Bellinger nodded. "Yes, but I'm afraid that I have no longer your view, my young friend, of the value of life. I am an old

man, though my years say otherwise, and I am not happy. To me— But all that is beside the story. I never had any inclination to yield to Vane. Even that attempt to foist a false check on him was made more to gain relief from his constant nagging and threatening than to escape from the situation itself. Last night I thought I heard voices in the kitchen. I was not sure, but I decided to risk Vane's anger. By twisting sidewise I was able to strike the bed with my clasped hands."

"We were there, sir," said Stuart. "We heard the knocking. Your man said it was a window rattling. I believed him, but Tod didn't. That's how we happened to come back to-day."

"I see. And you are Tod?" He looked at the latter closely. "I recall you now. You, and I think this other lad, were on the boat with me when I came up in July. You rescued my hat from going overboard."

"Yes, sir," agreed Tod eagerly. "But, Mr. Bellinger, why didn't you shout when you heard us? Were you gagged?"

"Practically," answered the other gravely. "Not by Vane, however. Some years ago I experienced a—a severe mental shock. My—some one whom I loved very dearly was—was taken from me. It resulted in a weakening of the vocal cords. I can speak no louder than I am speaking

at this moment. Indeed, prolonged talking even of this sort exhausts me. To-morrow I shall be able to speak only in whispers."

"Then please, sir—" began Stuart.

"No, no, I welcome the opportunity to converse with you. To-morrow I can nurse my voice back. I believe that it was the discovery of this—this affliction of mine that gave Vane the idea of blackmailing me. But perhaps not. Perhaps he had the scheme worked out when he came. Now I must dress. Have you the time?"

"It's twenty-one minutes past five, sir," said Tod.

"Thank you. Vane took charge of my watch and a few other valuables; some ninety dollars in bills as well. I shall pack and take the evening boat to Lakeside. To-morrow I shall return to the city. This place has many pleasant memories for me, but, alas, many sorrowful ones as well, and now, after this last unpleasant incident, I'm content to leave it. Perhaps you will be kind enough to wait while I get into my clothes and then assist me with my luggage. There should be food in the kitchen. Vane made no attempt to starve me, although perhaps he was holding that threat in reserve. Just look about, please, and do the honors for yourselves. I'll be with you quickly."

They waited in the living-room, talking in lowered tones. Stuart reminded the others that they would be late for supper; had already missed colors; but he didn't suggest leaving. It would have accomplished nothing if he had. Ten minuates later Mr. Bellinger was dressed and preparations for vacating the island began, the boys helping to pack a trunk and a bag, to secure the windows and lock up. It was while Stuart was looking after the window in the small room off the kitchen that had been occupied by Vane that he discovered Mr. Bellinger's wallet and watch and jewelry. Vane had had no opportunity to return for his loot, and it lay in plain sight on a small table under the single window. Well before the steamer was due they were at the landing with the baggage. The Pill had trundled the wheelbarrow back to the woodshed and returned, Tod had raised the black-and-white disk which signaled the steamer to stop and now there was nothing to do save wait. Well, yes, there was, too, for the boys had by now lost something of their awe of Mr. Bellinger and their story of the episode was told in detail and with some repetition, and right in the middle of Stuart's account of his sensations when he saw that baseball appear from nowhere and strike Vane's arm Tod gave a gasp.

"Mr. Bellinger," he exclaimed as Stuart stopped on a word, open-mouthed, "that isn't your hat, is it?"

Surprised, the gentleman removed the black felt he wore and surveyed it in some surprise. "Why, yes. Why not?"

"But the other one, sir! The one with the blue thing inside; the brown one that blew off on the boat that day."

"Oh, I gave that to Vane soon after he came. He had only a straw hat with him. But the 'blue thing' I have here, Tod." He turned the hat for the other to see the blue satin ribbon inside. It was embroidered with a monogram and some flowers. "That belonged to one of my boys," continued Mr. Bellinger gently. "His sweetheart gave it to him years ago and he wore it in his overseas cap when he went away. He kept it and brought it back with him, but the sweetheart had forgotten by then. I—I have kept it, too," he added, replacing the hat.

Tod was silent for a long moment, but it was plain that something was troubling him, and at last he blurted: "But it was that other hat that made me sure you were in the house, sir, when he said you weren't! It was on a hook in the kitchen and I knew it right away. If it hadn't been for that I wouldn't have thought of coming back today. And all the time it was his!"

"Then," said Mr. Bellinger, "I'm very glad that you didn't know the real owner."

"Yes, sir," agreed Tod with a rather forced smile. His faith in circumstantial evidence was never strong after that day.

The steamer was very late, and it was well after six o'clock and fully dark, when it finally snuggled up to the landing. They learned the cause of the boat's tardiness from one of the officers who stopped to greet Mr. Bellinger. "Well, sir," he said, "we don't have you for a passenger very often. Aren't you leaving early this year, Mr. Bellinger?"

"Yes, very early for me. I shall spend the night in Lakeside and go down with you in the morning."

"Fine, sir! Sorry to keep you waiting, but we had rather an unpleasant happening just above the Narrows and it kept us back. Struck a rowboat, sir; or, rather, he struck us. Looked as if he deliberately pulled across our bow. One man in it, as well as we could tell, and I guess he couldn't swim. We spent quite a while looking around but failed to find him."

"Indeed," said Mr. Bellinger gravely. "How unfortunate. The boat was, of course, smashed, but could you make out the color of it?"

"No, sir, it wasn't damaged much. We didn't try to get it, though. It was gray, with blue gun-

wales. Hope the man was no one you know, sir."

"He was no friend of mine," answered Mr. Bellinger. "I am paying the fares of these young gentlemen, by the way. They are going to Camp Graystone."

"Here's a paper for you, Stevie," called Syd Rhodes, tossing the article across the heads of the nearer boys about the counter. "Fox! Got it? Hale? Tod Hale? *Une billet!* Looks like a lady's fist, Tod!

"So's your old straw hat," laughed Tod as he took the letter and retreated to the porch. It was nearly a week after they had said good-by to Mr. Bellinger on the deck of the *Saranetta,* and the close of a busy day. The water sports had been held that forenoon, and he and Stuart had finished an ignominious fourth in their canoe event. He had done somewhat better later, however, by capturing a second in a swimming dash. In the afternoon Graystone's heroes of the diamond, behind the steady pitching of Armitage Pillsbury, better known as The Pill, had sent Camp Larrimore home with a drubbing. The final score had been 11 to 6, and Stuart had sent home three of those eleven runs with a circuit clout which still remained pleasurably in his memory. Although some of the visitors had left, most of them were remaining for the entertainment and dance. To-

morrow saw the end of the season and trunks and bags were already in process of packing.

Tod looked at the letter in his hand, yawned, looked again and then stepped quickly to the light of the lantern before the doorway. He tore open the envelope with heightened interest and read the single sheet it contained. The writing was very small, precise and perfectly legible; just the sort of a fist, Tod told himself, you'd expect of the writer. He was still engaged with the letter when Stuart and The Pill emerged from the Office empty-handed.

Tod beckoned and drew them along the porch to a lighted window. "Listen to this, fellows," he said exultantly. "It's from Mr. Bellinger. Shut up, Stu! 'Mr. George T. Hale, Camp—' But never mind that. Now listen! 'Since leaving the Lake I have made the decision not to return to it next summer, nor, I believe, for other summers to come. Now it occurs to me that some return for your timely interest in my fortunes may be made by offering you three young gentlemen the use of Bellinger's Island during such time as I remain absent. The place is, as I am aware, somewhat in need of attention, yet it would, I am sure, provide a suitable summer retreat for you, and, of course, such friends as you might care to surround yourselves with. The house is quite habitable and contains the ordinary

conveniences, as you perhaps noticed on the occasion of your visit. If this offer appeals to you I shall be glad of a word to that effect at your convenience, and in such case I can subsequently instruct my attorney to make out a lease in due and proper form. With personal regards to your two companions and sincere wishes for your future happiness, I am, Respectfully yours, Charles L. Bellinger.'

"What," demanded Tod, when he had ended, "do you think of that? Pretty punk, eh?"

"Fearful," agreed Stuart, grinning widely. "Oh, boy, Tod! Think of the fun we can have!"

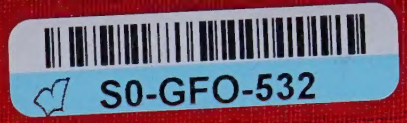
"I'll say so! A whole island to ourselves! Just you and—"

Memory checked him for the briefest of moments. It is doubtful if The Pill noticed the hesitation.

"Just you and Pill and me!"

THE END

REAM'S
LANCASTER, PA.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